

THE EXPLANATION

**The story of
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formerly Kálmán István**

THE EXPLANATION...

My daughter and her husband returned to Australia from their overseas trip. They had studied and worked in England, and visited Europe on a holiday.

While on the Continent, they visited Hungary in the company of my parents, who had left that country in 1946, for England where they made their home. To visit Hungary with their Australian grand daughter and her husband was an experience for both my parents and my daughter. For them to show the old places where they lived was important, and for my daughter to see the places where her father had survived the war was an emotional experience that stayed with her for a long time.

It might well be for that reason that when she returned to Australia, her present to her brother was a book on Hungary, written by an Englishman describing the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and tracing the reasons for it. The book was well illustrated and one of the photographs showed the public hanging of a Hungarian war criminal, Ferenc Szálasi, the self-declared Fuhrer of Nazi-Hungary.

I innocently remarked that the picture must have been taken by a photographer standing in front of or next to me. The silence was deafening. My children looked at me as if I had described my adventures on the moon. Probably they were shocked. I realised that they deserve an explanation.

This is my explanation.

DEDICATION

This description of my youth was written for my children and grandchildren and for their descendants. May they read it in disbelief and may they not understand that such actions could be those of people.

My "book" is also to remember those who remained human and I dedicate this book to them. Few received the recognition due to them for their humanity and courage.

Israel has trees planted in honour of persons who are declared "Righteous Gentiles". I wish to declare a few people to have been righteous humans. There must have been many more, but these are the people who have proved to me that even in a World gone mad there are people who remain selfless human beings.

I thank them in the name of my family and in the name of those who are not here to express their gratitude.

<i>Agocs Péter</i>	<i>Chauffeur, Storeman</i>
<i>vitéz Baskay Gyula</i>	<i>Member of the Upper House</i>
<i>Bocsor János</i>	<i>Lieutenant, Flour Miller</i>
<i>vitéz Gerlóczy Gábor</i>	<i>General, ADC to Regent</i>
<i>Reszeli Karolina (Csöpi)*</i>	<i>A little person, Actress</i>
<i>Reszeli Zsuzska*</i>	<i>Cleaning lady, Maid</i>
<i>Thiringer Vilmos</i>	<i>Manager of Royal Farms</i>

I also thank those who did not betray us:

Frau Eidam	Brothel keeper, Ex-prostitute
Kovács István,	Class mate who recognised me
Kovarcz Erzsébet (Buci),	Arrow Cross Minister's daughter
Szabó Néni and her son	Landlady who owned 10 beds

Mr. Hoia (the Romanian) and The Prostitute.

*** Csöpi and Zsuzska Reszeli were awarded the "Righteous of Nations" title by Israel and given the Order for Bravery by the Hungarian Republic in 2010 and decorated by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation in 2009**

PROLOGUE

It started just like any other day, but June 3rd, 1946 turned out to be an important one for me and my future family. If George Shillinger would not have come to Uni that day, or if he would not have felt safe with me to tell me his plans, or if we would not have met on campus when we did, I might never have become a citizen of the United Kingdom, married to a New Zealander, living in Australia.

George and I were first year students at the University of Engineering Studies in Budapest. We were not close friends but knew of each other's political feelings, ever since we stood side by side at one of the compulsory lectures by a visiting communist minister. We were unimpressed and being young, stupid and believing that our new-found democracy that has taken over from fascism has given us the right to have an opinion, we expressed, rather unwisely, a doubt about something or other that the lecturing politician stated.

I cannot now remember what it was that the Comrade Minister said, neither can he, for he was accused of being a Western spy and executed within the year, but we did get into trouble and were told by some fellow students, whose full-time job was membership of the Party, that if we wish to act in such a reactionary manner and show ourselves as being the same type of class aliens as our parents, there will be no place for us at the University.

Thus it was no surprise to me that George Shillinger trusted me and said good-bye. He was leaving for the border town of Szombathely that evening and meeting some of his friends in the best hotel of the small township and going across the border within the next 2 or three days.

I certainly was interested, because I heard from some rumour-monger or other that all University Students will have to volunteer for a year's service on the land or in a mine or building the railway, and having done my stint in these fields, I was less than willing. I knew that wielding a shovel in different political climates, under different dictatorships will still produce nothing but blisters and there are no long term benefits in becoming unpaid labourers.

Andrew Pór, a relation of mine has survived the Russian winter as a Hungarian army sergeant and Mauthausen Concentration Camp as a Jew, came home from Austria, waited around for a while in case his young brother returned from the copper mine labour camps of Bor in Serbia, (Leslie and thousands of other camp inmates didn't) got himself a fresh set of clothing, had a few good meals and then set off for the West. Being an experienced survivor, his opinion of the Hungary of early 1946, had to be respected. However, it would be simplifying matters to say that people left Hungary those days to escape having to do a year's service for the Nation. The atmosphere throughout the country was such that people were restless and the great unasked question: "What next?" was in everyone's mind.

After a War, into which Hungary got involved unwillingly, yet due to her geographical and political position automatically, which gave Hungary new territories without fighting, a war during which most of its Army was not in action against the enemy, yet was destroyed, - people were confused.

There is no simple one-page history available to explain the paradox that was Hungary during the first half of the twentieth century, - and there is no history available which would suit all the Hungarians. The way I saw Hungary's past is different from the views of the person who persecuted me for reasons of his politics or due to his intolerance or upbringing. Our differences were irreconcilable.

Even the Hungarian who did nothing against me or the likes of me, but whose only worry was to survive the war thought in a completely different fashion to me. His life in the post war era became one of belonging to organisations, attending demonstrations in favour of the Government and making sure that he keeps his mouth shut. He knew that he was not free, but he did not know what it means to be persecuted, - I did.

In 1946 I was a Hungarian, who realised that I had no future in Hungary. At the ripe old age of 20, I had a past, which I did not wish to remember, which was unhappy, frightening in retrospect and unbelievable in its injustice. Having lived through it, I could not believe what happened in Europe during the 1940's, yet it was true. How on earth could I foretell or be hopeful about my future, when I had no say in my past?

When the war finished there was a hope that things for us Hungarians will be different. The German war machine was beaten and the Russians, who liberated Hungary, allowed free elections to be held.

We were hearing about our new democratic institutions and there was no reason why Hungary should not become part of the new Europe. Yet within months we started to have our doubt and disappointments. When the communists did not win the free elections, they proceeded to gain power using less democratic means. This was not dissimilar to the way the Nazis took over Germany in 1933.

The fascists in Hungary may have ceased to advertise their old ideas, but did they really change? Just a few months after the war Jews were actually killed in Hungary, only because they were Jews and those involved were not prosecuted.

In fact, one evening walking in one of the main streets of Budapest, I was attacked by a group of louts, shouting anti-semitic slogans and when I complained to the police, who stood around watching it all, they shrugged their shoulder and suggested that I forget it.

There were many others who saw the light and left Hungary and it was obvious that getting across the border will become increasingly difficult. Already we heard of the mines, the blood hounds and the AVO, the communist political police, who have taken over the role of the thugs of the Nazi party storm-troopers. They did not need

to rehearse or study what to do, - often they were the same people and to make matters easier for them, they even took over the same buildings. The cellars of these buildings used to hold people because they were Jews, now they held people because they were capitalists. Some times they were the same people tortured by the same thugs, but for different reasons. Thus, the news that George was leaving Hungary for the West has struck a cord with me and I couldn't get to my father's office soon enough.

"George Shillinger is off to Szombathely tonight. I am going with him, what do you think?" I told him and waited for the explosion that never came. He agreed. Just like that.

My mother was not that easy. She could not see how she can prepare roast chickens, cakes, goose liver and have my clothing clean during the few hours left before the train left for the border town. I agreed there should be some time allowed to prepare myself for the trip and thus I rushed off to George's home to tell him that I will be coming but not for another three days.

George was pleased that I decided to come, but regretted that I have to delay my departure for the border. He was sure that by the time I get there, he and his friends will have got across the border.

"Never mind, I'll catch up with you in Vienna" I suggested, but he was sure that by the time I get to Vienna, he will be in New York, - at least. After all, he did speak 'perfect' English.

Back home my Mother was cooking feverishly, while the maid was washing, bleaching and ironing. Father was digging up gold coins and dollar notes in the coal cellar, I was opening toothpaste tubes and refilling them with gold chains. The gold coins are to be stitched into leather belts or maybe in toothpaste tubes, while the dollars go into match boxes. Where else?

The delay in leaving allowed me to say my good byes. My friends wished me luck and envied me, my ex girl friend, whom I have not seen for the previous 3 months, became hysterical, declared that she cannot live without me and I had to get her boy friend of the day to help me in getting away from her with my eyes unharmed.

I visited my aunts and uncles, who were quite surprised, at the stupid idea of my wishing to leave Hungary illegally and even more surprised that my parents agreed and aided me in this. My grandmother, a great little lady of 81, who by that time was quite forgetful, was very sad to hear that I am leaving Hungary for ever, promptly forgot it all and when I finally left she gave me a cheerful Adieu, the Hungarian equivalent of "See you later, Alligator".

On the evening of June 6th Mother, Father and I were off to the railway station. I bought a ticket to Szombathely, boarded the train, waved to my parents and I was off. No problems with either the police or the railways, and unlike so many previous partings, there was a complete absence of tears.

There was of course no reason for any tears, after all I was not going into the great unknown, I was going to the border, crossing it to get to Vienna, from where I am to contact my brother in England and my various relations in America, all of whom will be able to arrange my immediate visa for admission.

In fact, my parents made me promise that I will go to England and wait for them there, even though I preferred to emigrate to the US. However, I promised to await their arrival for a big family reunion with all four of us together after almost 8 years apart. In fact, if there was any sorrow on my leaving my parents behind, it was due not to any anxiety, but to their being envious of my seeing my brother before they will be able to visit him.

The train journey was completely uneventful. The train was full with peasants and Jews. The peasants were returning to their villages after bringing their farm produce to the city for barter. They were loaded up with lengths of textiles, linen and ironmongery and having been able to fortify themselves with their home made plum brandy, they were in high spirits.

More quiet were the other passengers, quite obviously Jews and travelling towards the border to leave the country. While a good proportion of them were assimilated Hungarian Jews, dressed not much different from the rest of the population, the majority were bearded Orthodox Jews from Poland, Romania or Russia, wearing their traditional black caftans and rabbinical hats. They were travelling for the past month or two and they were on their way to Palestine.

The fact that geographically they were travelling in the wrong direction did not seem to worry them. They tried getting out of Russia via Romania, but failed to get through to Turkey, so they were advised to go via Hungary to Austria and then on to their final destination and dream: Erec Israel.

Conversation with them was minimal. They spoke no Hungarian and I spoke no Jiddish, a fact which they could neither comprehend nor forgive. In spite of the close similarity of German and Jiddish, they could hardly understand my speaking German to them, which they answered in their own language, but increasingly slower and louder. In the end they felt offended by me, a Jew who was not prepared to talk in Jiddish, the language they believed all Jews were supposed to speak. It never occurred to them, nor was it possible to explain that Hungarian Jews were assimilated and could speak neither Jiddish or Hebrew.

We left Budapest's Southern Station at about 7 p.m. and the journey should have taken about 3 hours. It took longer and I arrived at around mid-night to the small railway station of Szombathely. I had two suitcases, it was raining, I had no idea where the hotel was or if my friend George is still there. Finally I found a sleepy railway employee, who told me where the hotel was, advised me to sleep in the packed waiting room, instead of chancing some marauding Russian soldiers, who were terrorising and robbing the population.

Nevertheless, I left the railway station and set off in the darkness for a 2 kilometer walk to the hotel. The streets were unlit, unfriendly and deserted. Obviously everyone else listened to the railway porter's advice. Expecting a cheery "stoj" from an official Russian patrol or an unofficial one, I wished I had listened to his advice.

I got to the hotel, rang the bell, and after a lot of questions by the porter, who came down from his bed in his underwear, I was admitted into the hotel. Yes, George was still in the hotel, so were his other friends. Yes, he had a bed for me, Mr Shillinger had arranged it. It was on the first floor, room 11, next to Mr Shillinger's room.

I went upstairs alone, dropped my luggage in my room and knocked on George's door. "Enter" and I did. George was in bed, smiling. His other two friends were also in their bed, they were also smiling. There was a man sitting at the table and he introduced himself as the member of the political police. He was also smiling. I cannot now remember for sure, but I think I was the only one who was devoid of all smiles.

At that stage how was I to know that being arrested was all that funny?

BEFORE THE WAR

I WAS BORN

I was born the younger of two sons, a matter I was never allowed to forget. My brother John was 5 years, 2 months and 12 days older and the age difference has always been slightly exaggerated, until it became six years. This falsification of our age difference was a major cause for the constant disagreements between my brother and me.

I also had a cousin, Eva, 3 years older than me, who could have been a sister, because she lived with us during school periods and we holidayed at her village home when we were not together in Budapest. She and John used to lord it over the little bloke, who made up in ferocity, what he lacked in age. In spite of lots of verbal and physical fights, the three of us were reasonable friends, even though adults must have had some difficulty in enjoying us.

On one occasion my Aunt Margit, Eva's mother, became quite hysterical while my brother and I had one of our not infrequent physical confrontations. The poor lady feared that we will be inflicting permanent damage on each other and she burst out crying. She was assured by her sister that her sons usually survive these bouts and will once again be the best of friends until the next fight.

My earliest memory is of my Mother being taken away in an ambulance from the huge block of flats we lived in. The combination of her being in pain and on a stretcher, watched by dozens of people from the building, caused this incident to stay in vivid memory. I can also remember visiting her in hospital, and how I ate her pudding in spite of the all prevailing stink of the ether, which was still making her throw up and retch, days after her operation. She was lucky to have survived an ectopic pregnancy, and was operated on in the nick of time.

She can recall how in the middle of the night my father awoke to her screaming in pain and suggested that she take some pain killers. When her subsequent screams woke him again, all he wanted to know why the stupid maid hadn't telephoned for the doctor, and promptly carried on snoring.

My father was undoubtedly the all-time prototype of male chauvinists, in a country and in an era when such achievement was not easy. At the same time, he was a loving, caring person who tried to get everyone to love him. In this he was not quite successful.

His wife must have adored him, but was not known to say a nice word about him or to him during the 63 years of marriage, which was never softened by the utterance from either side of a friendly word. If they were not arguing or shouting at each other, they were not on speaking terms. They were quite ingenious in finding new grounds to fight about. Yet they were devoted to each other's well being, and were quite friendly to each other when parted. Under these circumstances it was not

surprising that they were apart a lot. They hardly ever went on holidays together, nor did they take their children with them.



Father went off on his trips to the watering places in Hungary, and abroad to places like Karlsbad, Abbazia, the Semmering in Austria and to resorts in Switzerland. Mother went to visit her relations or her children who were sent off to have their holidays abroad, so they may learn foreign languages, or were sent to relations, to be out of the way.

During their absences they became very fond of each other. Mother complained about how she was missing him, while he wrote long letters, begging her to mend her ways, and not criticise and not hurt him, and if possible become even more subservient.

The minute they got together, all was forgotten and they were off on the usual shouting match. There are a few classic examples of this happening and they must not go unrecorded.



On one occasion Mother went off with some relations to Felden in Austria, and having been on his own for two weeks, Father decided to travel there and spend a week with her and us children, then 2 and 7 years old.

Mother and the rest of the family and relations picked him up at Felden station and on the walk back to the hotel, he put his arm round Mother, who complained that her hair would be ruined. Father turned round, walked back to the station,

bought a ticket and traveled back to Hungary, without as much as saying "Wiedersehen".

Another time Father returned from Karlsbad with an expensive bracelet for Mother. It was handed over and Mother, far from the tactful little downtrodden girl Father would have liked her to be, said: "this is so beautiful that it must have been one of your girlfriends who picked it" at which Father picked up the bracelet, flung it against the wall, and most of the expensive carved gem stones disintegrated.

Eventually the bracelet was returned to Czechoslovakia and was repaired, and Mother still maintains that if it wasn't picked by a woman, it was given to her because Father either got two of them cheaper and gave one to the other lady, or

else because he had a bad conscience. Probably both of her assumptions were correct.

It was not really surprising that the children grew up to be rather frightened of our parents. Mother lashed into us with her critical tongue, Father bellowed at Mother, employees, and us - every one. It was not a particularly happy childhood, - but we could not compare, because we hardly had any friends.

The problem was that we were rich. Not terribly rich when measured by the standards of the Western world, but excruciatingly so when compared with the rest of the population around us. We had everything: from a refrigerator to a radio, from central heating to a car. Come to think of it we had more than just one car. We had a number of cars during the weekends, when the chauffeurs of the travelling salesmen had to deliver the cars to stand outside our home, until 5 a.m. on Monday morning, when Father's chauffeur-driven salesmen were off again to get orders for agricultural machinery and farm equipment.

Hungary in the 1930's was in the throws of the depression, just as the rest of Europe. People were unemployed and hungry, while a minority survived with the minimum of inconvenience. We belonged to this minority. Father's business was to supply equipment and specialised machinery and other requisites to the huge farming estates of the aristocracy and church and it was a time when drought animals were being replaced by tractors and farm labourers were replaced by machinery, causing even greater unemployment in the rural areas. In spite of his being most sympathetic to the hardship which farm labourers had to endure, I doubt if this caused any pangs of conscience for my Father, - why should it? Was he to refuse assisting the mechanisation of Hungarian agriculture? Certainly not, his job was to give himself and his family the best of everything, especially as regards the education of his sons. They should have the best education he never had, they should have the best education money can buy.

In any case there was only a limited amount one could do to help the unfortunates who felt the misfortune of the depression. I well remember the beggars on the street and the hungry children, who came to stand outside the footpath tables of the coffee shops, asking to be given a piece of bread by the patrons, until chased away by the waiters.

On one occasion a man was found semi-conscious outside our home and the maid called the police, believing the man to be drunk. In due course a sweating policeman, equipped by a saber they all carried arrived, having had to walk up the hill in the summer heat, and being more experienced in these matters than the maid, pronounced that the man is starving. Indeed the man, having been given some food and milk revived sufficiently to be helped by the policeman to walk downhill.

This particular occurrence was instrumental in my realising that we must have been more privileged than others. It was literally the first time that problems from

outside the iron fence surrounding our garden were penetrating to the rather insular society which we, family and the staff were.

The problems of "wealth" were manifold. We lived in those hills of Buda, where those with money congregated, yet we went to school elsewhere. Our school mates lived in the City and had no intention of being bothered with the likes of us, who had to go home after school. At home, we were not encouraged to play on the streets - on the hill there weren't any level streets to play on anyway. There were some unused blocks of land, and we played football with some other kids sometimes, but something was always wrong with those other kids. Mostly they were not supposed to be good enough for us.

We were supposed to find our friends amongst our relatives, with whom we were thrown together, whenever Mother visited her many distant relations or they were invited to visit us. The invitations depended on the scholastic capabilities of the offspring of the particular relation and we were instructed to become friends of those relations who were studious, in the hope that their example will rub off. There was nothing wrong with the idea, except that neither John nor I had any contemporaries amongst our relations.

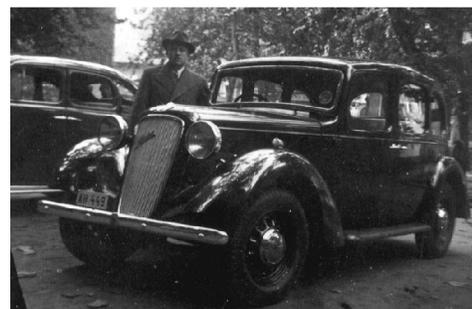


It was not understood by our parents that we missed having friends. Not having the same mobility as they had, we could not be where our school mates were. We were envious that they were able to meet each other and get to know girls, visit other kids, go to movies, etc. We had to get up earlier than our classmates to get to school on time from the "villa" on Rózsadomb (Rose Hill). When school was over, we had to hotfoot it back to our house on the Hill;

the sweet excitement of watching the girls parading up and down the Boulevards of Budapest was not for us. Poor little rich boys!

At the same time we were always told that we were poor. We had less pocket money than the others, because we were not allowed to know that we were better off. Our good clothing could only be worn at family parties, but when we went visiting poor relations, we were not allowed our best suits. We only had toys and belongings if they helped us in our school work. We could have gold nibbed fountain pens, but no cowboy outfits. We had a Bechstein piano, but no football. We could not play the piano and we weren't that good at playing soccer either.

We had cars going from the house to Father's office next door to the school, but we had to catch the bus. If by some miracle we got a lift, the



chauffeur was instructed to drop us off some distance away from the school, so our class mates would not realise that we were not as poor as they were; or as poor as maybe their parents told them that they are.

We had no family life as such. My father visited the "Club" with his friend Julius, a solicitor, every afternoon and had dinner there or where ever. There is no doubt that he had affairs and probably always had a "steady" but conducted his affairs as discreetly as he could, and was satisfied that as long as he was discreet and provided the family with a lovely home and the trappings of well being, his responsibility ended.



He has certainly looked after his family well, or at least he was convinced that he had. He got a famous architect to design the house on the Hill for himself and the family. The architect was famous because he built a row of buildings on the shores of the Danube for thousands of people to live in flats, - he could not have been famous for designing practical homes for families.

We had a two story house, where we had two large rooms for sitting with and entertaining visitors, a dining room which was the same size as the two lounge rooms, - combined. To get into either of the lounges you either had to go out to the entrance hall, i.e. the staircase or else walk through the dining room, which was also the only way to get to the enclosed verandah, supposed to be the place for family togetherness. There was no way to approach the kitchen without passing the downstairs toilet, outside of which was the only place in the house, where an icebox and later the electric refrigerator could be placed.

It must be pointed out that the downstairs toilet was usually in use before meals by one of the six people entitled to use it and when being used by my father it's door was always open during and after. Thus the smell of the food, the kitchen and the toilet blended into a smell which I can still recall.

There were further examples of architectural stupidities upstairs. The largest room there was the laundry. Every single item laundered had to be carried downstairs, through the kitchen and hung in the backyard and then carried back to the laundry to be ironed. There was no shower, but that was in accordance with contemporary practice in Hungary. The bathroom had no hot water supplied to the bathtub, thus summer or winter the chip heater had to be lit if anybody wanted to have a bath. In the mean time in the cellar a fire was kept going all the year round to supply hot water to the bidet, and even to the tiny circular basin installed especially for washing one's teeth. However no hot water was available in either the bathroom, kitchen or the laundry.



The house was quite large and thus it was ingenious to design it in such a way that it contained two bedrooms only. Thus my parents lived in one bedroom and, with an interconnecting door between the two bedrooms, my brother, cousin Eva and I lived in the other, as well as a governess, when we had one. And we actually lived in that bedroom, because that was the place where we three had to do our home work, play, sleep and conduct our fights. When in 1939, John left Hungary and vacated our shared bedroom, he was a month off 18, Eva was 16 and I was approaching 13. Quite extraordinary, especially because of our home being used filming movies, as being one of the outstanding homes of that era!

Admittedly, the upstairs area also had a room for two of the maids, the size of which allowed for two beds and nothing else. Their wardrobe had to be kept in the laundry but their skirts were stored under their beds. Hungarian peasant women wear up to 15 skirts (simultaneously) and therefore none of them would have had less than 30 to 50 skirts, hence the need for permanent under-bed-storage facilities.

The lady who came once a month to saw our shirts, pajamas and underwear had to sit at the top of the stairs, - there was no room elsewhere to set up our pedal operated Singer sewing machine, nor was there any room to store the clothing required by the three younger members of the family.

Lots of space was taken up by areas hardly ever used including our Hungarian veranda and the balcony used only once a year to watch the fireworks on St. Stephen's day.

It could not have been a more impractical house, but it was pretty, - from the outside.



I WAS A BOY.

After I became eight years old, it was thought that we were old enough not to have governesses, which helped with the catering and sleeping arrangements. Our governesses were Austrian ladies who forced us to speak German to them and thus we were supposed to become proficient in the language. The Governess slept in our bedroom, making it a very cozy foursome. Poor little rich children.

Mostly we had more maids than beds and therefore one of them had to sleep on the settee in the downstairs lounge. At the time I could not understand why my 17 year old brother had to go downstairs to fetch himself glasses of water, but by the time I became the same age I not only understood, but envied his opportunities.

It requires no great imagination to realise the disturbance which the occasional overnight visit of my Aunt Margit caused. Who shall camp where became an exciting game of guessing and by the time we settled the matter of musical beds, it seemed that everybody had a change. Just the same, usually she finished sleeping in our parent's bedroom on a sofa, since the sitting room settee was usually occupied by a maid. However, much greater were the problems when one or the other of the children contracted a contagious disease, such as mumps, chicken pox or some other illness, which required Government decreed isolation, such as whooping cough, scarlet fever and the dreaded diphtheria.

With three children in three different schools we all managed to have our major illnesses at separate times and the required major isolation was indeed a major affair. Everybody moved out of the first floor and beds were made in the sitting and dining rooms downstairs. The maids made their beds in the kitchen and the upstairs laundry and food was cooked and transported upstairs for the sick child and Mother, who were locked up for the duration upstairs. Outside the house a large red sign declared it off limits to all except doctors and warned that any who came in contact with the inhabitants will have to be isolated also. The isolation lasted until doctors announced the sick to be cured and the Health Department's lorry and employees arrived to wash down the walls and take away everything else to be disinfected.

Scarlet fever lasts 6 weeks, as does whooping cough, while diphtheria is usually over in 3 weeks, (provided the child survives). We all had all these illnesses, except that I escaped whooping cough, (until the age of 40), but instead I was one of three children in the Hungarian medical history of the day, who contracted diphtheria for a second time.

The first time I had diphtheria I managed to finish up with a heart ailment. The second time I became ill on the day my Mother left for a conducted tour of Italy. We waved her off at the station and visited my grandparents on the way home, when I became sick and started to shake from the fever that suddenly erupted. My father

contacted our lady doctor who specialised in children's diseases, who came immediately and suspected diphtheria, which the assorted visiting professors who were ferried up to the house at great expense eventually confirmed.

There was some question of recalling Mother, who at this stage was still on the train towards Italy, and another possible alternative was that I should be taken to a hospital. In the end it was decided that I should remain at home and our "Aunt Doctor" Miss Rella Beck moved in to live with me for the duration of my diphtheria. Also, my Father's Uncle's widow, Sari Kellner, who was almost totally deaf, came to become my nurse. Her self-sacrifice in allowing herself to be incarcerated was greatly appreciated, but as far as I was concerned it became an additional hazard to my survival. I was constantly exhausted from having to shout to make myself understood and additionally she was such a tremendously high spirited and good humoured person that she made me convulse with her stories and I had constant laughing fits, - not to be encouraged for a dying child.

On the evening when we were expecting Mother to return from her Italian holiday, she kept me laughing by telling me about her daughter-in-law who used to chew the



nail varnish off her fingers whenever she was nervous. The practical demonstration my Aunt Sari gave was allowing me to concentrate on laughing instead of being preoccupied with Dr Beck's effort in keeping my heart going with injections, while I was having one heart attack after another.

Mother arrived that evening and over night my condition deteriorated sufficiently to be declared an intensive care case and at 5 a.m. Mother and I were picked up by an ambulance and taken to a hospital where my condition immediately improved. Nevertheless, I still had to stay in hospital for some 4 weeks recuperating and even when I could return home, I had to stay another 4 months in bed, receiving daily injections to keep my heart going at the required speed.

Our routine at home had to change, because Mother became my nurse and could not leave home. Instead her relations and friends made the pilgrimage to our house. I spent my days in the children's room upstairs, or else the maids set up a deck chair in the garden and I was carried by one or two of them to lay in the deck chair all day. In the end I had to re-learn to walk again and over a period I was allowed a few minutes longer every day to be up and walking slowly in the garden.

Our garden was looked after by gardeners and Father who attempted to drown the plants by watering. In the front we had a rather unkempt lawn (these were pre-lawnmower days) in the middle of which was a flower-bed full with rose bushes. Another flower-bed, also overrun with rosebushes, was surrounded with a pedestrian path, and another one, intended but never used for cars, both of which were covered with red gravel.

We used these paths to ride our bicycle against the stopwatch and on falling off, collected the most awful gravel rashes in the process. Anti tetanus injections were handed out rather freely by our Aunt Doctor, causing John to react by fainting fits and being in much greater danger from his injection than from tetanus.



Planted in the front garden, just inside the 2 meter high wrought iron fence were two poplar trees. One of these was struck by lightning and grew up to be shorter than the other. Because of the size difference they were popularly referred to as Jancsi and Pista, my brother's and my nicknames.

Immediately in front of the house and in fact partly covering the window of the children's room was a magnificent wild-almond tree. Two stories high, it survived the building of the house, which was one of the first houses in the as yet unnamed street. When somebody asked Father if he has any suggestions as to what name he should apply for the street, Father remembered the almond tree on the site and suggested "Almond Street" and thus "Mandula utca" was born, named after our "mandula" or almond tree.

The garden in the rear was used to provide us with fresh fruit off the trees and bushes. We had wonderful cherries, including a white variety, strawberries, blackcurrants and all types of berries, which we enjoyed eating, before or after they ripened.

There was also a very small area grassed on which we were supposed to play football, but being too small it was seldom utilised. We preferred using the empty block next door, even though it was not very level. The backyard also had some drying lines erected between trees and on the back wall of the house there was a "klopper" e.g. two hefty wooden rollers mounted away from the wall onto which the persian carpets could be hung and beaten by cane carpet beaters. Another use for these carpet beaters was that, while we were small, we were constantly threatened that they will be used on our backsides.



The whole property was surrounded by high fences, ornamental in front, wire fences on the sides and in the rear, topped up by lines of barbed wire to keep unwelcome visitors out. In the front, affixed to the ornamental fence was an engraved marble plaque, telling the admiring public passing by that the house was designed by Mr Emil Vidor, "Master Art Architect". When somebody pinched the marble, Father received a letter from the solicitor of the architect reminding him

that the contract stipulated that a marble plaque will commemorate for ever the art of Mr Emil Vidor. Mr Vidor's pride in our house was not entirely misplaced, because it looked quite acceptable from the outside, it was only the inside which was so utterly messed up.

We usually had dogs, sometimes more than one. These were not pets, but trained guard dogs, and were kept on the chain all day and allowed to roam in the garden during the night only. Unfortunately, our dogs did not last very long, they were either too vicious or too friendly.

One of them was in the latter category and therefore was sentenced to be banished into the country where a kind farm manager was prepared to accept him for re-schooling in the art of scaring off burglars.

The dog, (named Hacsek after the more comic member of a Laurel and Hardy type of cabaret act), was duly taken by one of Father's country salesmen deep into the country and poor old Hacsek was replaced and forgotten, until months later a bedraggled and thin Hacsek arrived at our door step. Of course we had to keep him and his successor, a St. Bernard monster, was renamed to become "Sajo" in honour of the other member of the comedy duo. The two dogs became inseparable and both were guard dogs in name only. Hacsek and Sajo were the closest we came to having pets. (There are several versions for the naming of the dogs, this is one of many!)

There were two cellars under our house. One of them contained the coal and the heaters, which were coal fired. The other contained the janitor and his wife and usually a child. The janitor's "flat" contained just one basement room with a toilet outside and a wash hand basin which was open to the weather. All this was underground for the most part, although there was a high level window strip along the uppermost portion of the wall, which allowed some air and light to enter.

The janitor, who also doubled as the driver of our car and his wife, who was one of the cleaning ladies, were responsible to keep the fire going in the cellar. To feed the oven with coal, about a yard from where they were living, they had to leave their room, go upstairs into the backyard, enter the house through the kitchen, get into the area where the icebox was, pass the toilet, enter the entrance hall, go under the staircase, open the cellar door and walk down the steps. Imagine this performance two or three times a day, in rain, snow and sludge, allowing the heat to escape and carrying in the mud.

The congestion in the kitchen was amazing and unceasing. The cook was cooking, the janitor's wife was carrying carpets from upstairs to be beaten in the back yard, the maid was cleaning silver, Irma was cooking her dietary food, the children were eating bread with goose liver and the janitor was slaughtering some chooks.

The only persons, who except for meal times, were not to be seen in the kitchen, were the gardener (who only came once or twice a week), the washerwoman and the ironing lady, (who both came once a week). We also had a lady who came for two

days at least once a month to sew shirts, pajamas and underwear for the children and Father. The Singer sewing machine was kept in a corner of the stair case and traffic to upstairs was thus impeded when the monthly sew-in was in progress; yet another monument to architectural ingenuity.

Mother did not spend much time in the kitchen and if she did, it was not for cooking or preparing something. She usually got up for breakfast with her husband and then returned to bed. The cook and Irma, after she returned from hospital, came along to sit at the end of her bed around 9 and they had a conference about the day's menu. With the exception of the meat, which was ordered in Town for delivery by Mother, the chicken, eggs and the geese were delivered on a regular basis by some peasant women, and our cook was responsible to buy the ingredients, such as rice, flour and salt from the traveling grocer.

Through Father's connections in the country we were given a lot of game. Thus we ate a lot of pheasants, venison and rabbit and also quite a lot of fish. Thus shopping for food was not an important part of Mother's life, although visiting shops was an all consuming passion for her.

On the other hand Mother spent a lot of time in fashionable coffee shops. After delivering Father to the swimming pool for his daily swim and then driving him to work, the chauffeur usually returned and drove Mother into Town, where she either met her friends over coffee or visited members of her family. She became a charitable and thus beloved lady of her family which, having started well off, became more impoverished as time went on, while my Father was doing better than ever. Not so my Mother, who was kept on a very tight rein, and had to ask his permission before spending any money outside her housekeeping allowance.

They were genuinely and quietly charitable. For instance we had Irma, a young peasant girl from the country as a junior maid, who developed some illness, which necessitated hospitalisation, soon after she joined us. Poor Irma spent 5 years in hospital and my Mother visited her every week, kept her in clothing and pocket money, and even sent sums of money to her father. When she was ready to leave hospital, she returned to us to be a semi-invalid in our home for another 4 or 5 years, being looked after by Mother and the other maids and the cook.



In 1944, when anti-Jewish regulations forbade her continuing to be a "servant" with us, she had to leave, thus becoming unemployed and she returned to her village and her drunkard father. After the end of the war she could hardly wait to hear that we are prepared to take her back. She returned to us as soon as she could. Soon she was very sick again and I remember my Mother and I, in the snow, pushing her on a toboggan to Mother's doctor, waiting while she had surgery under local anesthetic, taking her back home and carrying her upstairs to her bed.

She never recovered fully and she never left us. We left her when we left Hungary, but not until she had been taken over by a relation, in whose home she died after a life of being looked after by and working for our family. She was 38 when she died.

We children were brought up by a large number of nurses, maids, cooks, chauffeurs, and teachers. We were both shockingly bad at school, a luxury we could afford, since our own teachers from school secretly coached us in the afternoon, and we knew that their fees for that were higher than their salaries from the State. So we didn't need to bother much, knowing that in spite of what Father was preaching, we could not fail our school exams.

In addition to being coached by our teachers other experiments were tried, including sending us to do our homework with relations whose children were doing well in school, without being nagged by their parents or having the teachers bribed. This method was not very successful either.

As soon as the school holidays started we children were away on learning a language. John was sent to summer camps in Austria first and later to St Gallen in Switzerland. I was first sent to the German speaking part of Czechoslovakia and when that part of the country became Germany I had to spend my summer holidays in Austria. Luckily for me, Austria was taken over by Hitler in 1938 also and thus at the age of 12 I was allowed to have a holiday without the ulterior motive of learning German.

From then on I was sent to spend time with my cousin Eva and her parents in the small village of Szölösgyörök, 7 kilometres from Lake Balaton. I must say, that I enjoyed being there. I was getting on well with Eva and her parents were delightful. Her mother, Aunt Margit was my mother's younger sister and she was a quiet, helpful and gentle woman who lived very happily with her husband Uncle Bandi. He had excellent humour and he was a lot of fun. He had all the time for us children, taught us card games and beat us at chess and told us stories of his youth and his relations and played the cimbalom for us.



My uncle had one of the two shops in the village, and we visitors were allowed to help serving the customers, all of whom were peasants or farm labourers and their families. If the Vadász shop did not stock something it was only because it wasn't made or grown and nobody but him knew where to find the rare treasures he had put away for the unlikely event that somebody might ask for it. He sold everything from groceries, such as bulk sugar and flour to underwear and fabrics, kerosene and homemade soap, not to mention farming tools and building materials. The only

thing he did not stock were electrical appliances, because there was no electricity in the village.

The "laird" i.e. Count Jankovits, who owned half the village and almost all of the land around it, was of the opinion that electric light is bad for your eyes and therefore did not allow it to be connected. And that was that. He also had a stone fence, with glass embedded on top of it, right round his 30 acre park and when he visited the village church once a year, the side where his pew was had to be kept free of people, as he did not wish anybody to sit behind him. In spite of it all he was revered by the village people. I doubt if he reciprocated their feelings and must have regarded the people of the village as his serfs.

My Uncle Bandi was also loved by the inhabitants of the village but for a different reason. The peasants and farm labourers of the village were always broke and Uncle Bandi had the most elastic slate ever. No one was ever refused credit or a handout of some flour or sugar by Uncle Bandi. Often a sick person sent a child for some food and he used to send more than they asked for.



Uncle also had a small amount of land which was bearing maize and grains. He hated cattle and kept no cow, but fattened pigs and had geese (which were force fed by hand to produce the famous goose liver) and poultry, which was picking away for feed in the yard or outside on the road. There was little danger for the chicken to be run over, the traffic on the road consisted of the once

daily arrival of a large car, which was the "bus" and maybe twenty horse or oxen drawn carts per day.

There was also the picturesque departure in the mornings of the various herds, first the cattle, then the goats and sheep, followed by the pigs and finally the geese. They were herded along by kids, whose job it was to lead the animals from the peasant houses along the main road to the various communal grazing areas and then bring them back in the evening into their sheds and stalls. It was amazing to see these animals hearing the bells of the lead steer and setting out to join the herd and in the evening, when unerringly they found their way back to their own cow shed. The same applied to the pigs and the geese, except they required no bells and supplied their own sound effects.

Aunt Margit and Uncle Bandi always had at least two horses which were used on the field and to take grain to and from the mill, and most importantly to be harnessed by the coachman in front of the sulky and transport us in luxury to the Lake for our days on the "beach".

Lake Balaton is Europe's largest lake (about 75 by 14 kilometres) and became the "Riviera" of Hungary. All around it holiday resorts were built, with hotels, casinos,

health resorts, etc. The lake was used for swimming and all types of water sports, especially small yachting in the summer, while in the winter ice yachting was possible on the frozen lake.

Through Eva I made lots of friends and our days at lake side were always happy. One of our friends was allowed to use his parent's sailing boat and we had long and exciting sails, darting in and out of small bays where fish was just asking to be caught.

Back in the village I had many other friends who were different from what we were meeting back in Budapest. There was the blacksmith, who allowed me to pump the bellows and tried to teach me how to shoe a horse. Then there was Uncle Geleta, the little coachman who looked after the horses and who allowed me to drive the cart and sulky. I also knew the some years older son of the count's farm manager, who was quite friendly to me, - no doubt instructed by his father to look after me, due to the fact that the farm was a customer of my fathers firm.

This boy, whose father was quite high in the village pecking order, took his duties of looking after me quite seriously and thus on one occasion made me an offer which I did not have since. One late afternoon I was in his company in the count's park when sex entered our conversation. I did not dare to admit that at the age of 15 I still had no practical experience in these matters and when he suggested that he will get me a partner, I was too petrified to refuse his offer.

He took me near the path where the farm labourers or their children were approaching the count's dairy for their daily ration of milk and suggested that I pick any girl. When I did not, he stopped two young girls, told one of them to go with me beyond the bushes and disappeared with the other. I followed the girl, who lay down on the grass, lifted her skirt and waited for me to do the expected.

I made her promise not to tell my refusal to consummate with her my friend's kind offer and sent her away after a decent interval to fetch her milk. Eventually my friend returned from his escapade and I thanked him for the wonderful time I had with my little girl friend, who must have been about 14 years old.

The village was run by petty officials, who received their orders from the Count and the officials of the shire. Nevertheless they were approachable and appeared to be benevolent. On the other hand, the two gendarmes, who were in charge of public security in the village were regarded and acting as semi-gods. Just to sight them was sufficient for grown up and innocent men to become silent and frightened. The most raucous revelry in the pub ceased when they arrived to have a drink, for which they did not even offer to pay. At the slightest pretence they chained up people and beat them into confessing, whatever crime they wanted to solve. I remember them walking into Uncle Bandi's store, selecting whatever they fancied and suggesting that he puts the debt on their never-to-be-paid slate.

While John and I were on our various holidays, Mother and Father had a chance to be on their own, but of course our absence was used for them to go their separate ways. Mother some times went to Oradea-Mare in Romania to visit her Aunt Szidonia or just stayed at home, while Father went to places abroad, - on his own. Wherever they went, the important thing seemed to be that the children went somewhere else. But even then, my brother and I were never sent to the same foreign place together, - in case we were to speak Hungarian to each other.

From the age of eight, I cannot remember ever spending a holiday with my parents, although in December 1937 I was taken along a business trip by my Father, after which we stayed two days in a big hotel at Balatonfüred. On the second morning, just before we were to leave the hotel I decided to test the emergency light arrangement, which consisted of a candle and match. It worked and the staff, with the help of the resident fire brigade saved the hotel, even though the room, together with our luggage was burned to cinders.

My Father paid up for the curtain, carpet and furniture and we travelled back home without a single word being said during the 4 hour trip. The road was covered by ice, but the mood inside the car was a great deal icier. On arriving home the day before Christmas Eve, my Father immediately blamed Mother on my becoming an arsonist, they had a fight and in this fashion Christmas 1937 was as much a write off as many other occasions became due to the bickering of my parents.

There is no doubt that our parents meant well. Just the same, even in a community which was peculiar, and deserved to be subjected to violent change, our parents were special. They lived the sort of life which cannot be described. They were both larger-than-life characters, and they continued to be just that until they were approaching 90 and in a strange country, where they continued to enrich and unnerve and disturb and amuse all who came in contact with them. Their "little" boys, well into their fifties still found it difficult to communicate with them and they still felt endangered by their constant criticism. They continued to fight, worry and care for each other right up till they were parted by the death of my father, in his 90th year.

HISTORY

The Czechs and the Hungarians had some problems in 1916. Twenty years later I found out that I was Hungarian, when at the age of 9 I was pushed into a stream by some Czech kids while attending a holiday camp at Spindlermühle in the Sudetenland part of Czechoslovakia. When, desperately unhappy, I wrote to my parents wanting to go home, I received encouraging letters and finally a visit from Father, who was on his way to take the cure at Karlsbad. He explained to me that if I wanted to become a "Weltreisender" and his assistant, I must learn German and I therefore had to stay.

I became wet once again, when a year later, while in a holiday camp in Gars-am-Kamp in Austria, I found out that I was Jewish. This time I was thrown fully clothed into a lake by an Austrian Nazi, who was one of the teachers there.

I was quite surprised and disappointed at this as I did not regard myself in any way different from other people or kids. In fact, while I was thus "enjoying" my holiday in Austria, the 1936 Olympics were celebrated in Berlin. The radios were blaring forth about the fabulous German organisation, Hitler's pride in the victories of the German athletes, etc... I was also enthusiastic and proud and most impressed with the achievements of Germany and even Herr Hitler. Being 10 years old, it never occurred to me that I have a problem with the rulers of Germany or vice versa.

I was especially excited listening to the Olympic broadcasts since the Hungarians were doing very well. Ten Gold medals and scores of silver and bronze medals placed the Hungarians third in the Olympics, being beaten only by Germany and USA. Little did I know that one of the Jewish Gold Medal winners will die while serving in the same battalion as I and the brother of another will be rescued by me from a concentration camp.

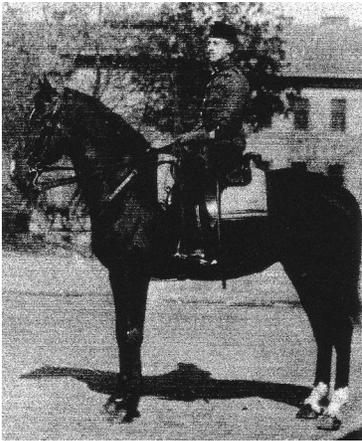
At the age of 10 I was not really interested in religion, but I suppose that being thrown into a freezing lake, when unable to swim made me interested in the reasons for receiving special treatment and also I commenced reading newspapers, where almost daily there was some reference to some government decree limiting the Jews of Hungary. Nothing as serious as was the case in Germany, but it was obvious that the traditional anti-semitism of the Hungarian population would be nurtured as the official policy of the Hungarian government.

On the other hand, Mother was religious. When she was only 10 years old she lost her own Mother, whose parents she thereafter lived with. Mother was the eldest of two girls, Ilonka and Margit, and two boys, Jenő and Imre. Her father remarried after being a widower for some 6 or 7 years, an action which was considered hasty and thus he was never forgiven by the family of my great-grandmother.

The new stepmother was not a particularly lovable or happy person. Emilia, daughter of a Baron, known as Anyika was a shy, quiet old lady all her life. The second marriage produced one son, Zoltán, who was ignored by everybody including his own father, but excepting Mother who was always very good to her Stepmother and Stepbrother.

So was Father who, on my Grandfather death in 1925 insisted that Mother and her brother and sister should renounce their inheritance in favour of the Stepmother, who was left intestate by my Grandfather. This in turn made Father less than popular with some of those who thus lost their inheritance. Not that there was a great deal left by my maternal Grandfather and my parents had to help his widow and son during the 19 years she survived my Grandfather.

Mother's life on the farm of her grandparents wasn't easy. Her grandmother was running the show and let every body know it. She looked after the two Tauszig orphan girls, (while the two boys stayed with their Father) and additionally three little Pick girls: Tusi, Lenke and Lili. Mother was the eldest of the Tauszigs and had to take an active part in bringing up the others.



When later she met and fell in love with my Father, she found that everybody was against her choice. To allow a Bank Director's daughter to marry the son of a Blacksmith-Tailor-Shopkeeper-Publican, whose major asset was that he was handsome in his hussar uniform, was a catastrophe too bad to contemplate. Permission to marry was refused, and this decision was re-considered only when my Mother was found unconscious with her head in the gas oven.

Those days there was a tremendous emphasis to ensure that the classes were kept apart and inter marriage between the rich and the poor was not encouraged and was just as undesirable as marriage between a Jew and a Gentile or a White and a Negro. Luckily, due to the absence of Negroes, there was no colour problem in Hungary.

My maternal grandfather was a well educated gentlemen. He worked in a Bank all his life and became the Manager of the Branch in Szekszárd, a medium sized town, known for its excellent wine. His official title was "Bank Igazgato Ur" (Mr Bank Director) suggesting a grandeur not easily understood these days. Additionally, he had a vineyard and thus he was a Property Owner. Had he not been Jewish, he could have been one of the "landed gentry". He certainly tried to behave accordingly, without accumulating much in assets.

If that would not be impressive enough, my Mother's maternal grandparents, the Pick's of Szilasbálás were big-time land owners or at least renters of land. They were also against this mismatch and were sure that Father is a fortune hunter who was only interested in the sizeable dowry, which used to be part of the marriage settlement those days.



Father's parents were not too keen either. They must have felt totally outclassed by Mother's Bank Director father and the landed grandparents. They could see nothing but trouble and in any case they disliked their future daughter-in-law, who was pretty, well dressed and educated, could not cook or sew and was more interested in playing tennis than in becoming a shop keeper.

That they got married against such odds was due to the willfulness of Ilonka, who must have believed to have found the dreams of her life in Józsi. She fought for the right to make her own decision and it was finally one of her uncles, Uncle Dezső, the only person who trusted the Hussar Corporal who became my Father and who believed that he will make it. Uncle Pór Dezső became her only supporter in her wish to marry Father. Luckily for them, Uncle Dezső was the favourite and most successful son of my Mother's grandmother. This rotund and bossy matriarch finally gave her blessing to the wedding and that was that, - my Mother got what she wanted.



Ten days before her wedding, her eldest brother, Jenő (Eugene) Tauszig died in the Spanish Flu epidemic and she herself was so sick that doctors wondered if she would survive. She did and the wedding took place. The same week revolution broke out and communism was declared in Hungary.

Four years earlier, at the outbreak of the war in 1914 my father was 22 and to his horror, when mobilised, became a recruit of the famous 10th Hussars. They wore black boots, red pants, sky-blue and red jackets with heavy gold braiding and a fur lined jacket

with fur collar on their left shoulder, to leave their right hand free to wield their sabres. They never went anywhere without their spurs, which could be heard from a distance and caused the girls to look for their idols. They were the elite of the elite, and were the pin-ups of all the Hungarian girls, a welcome compensation my father never failed to fully exploit during his 5 years as a 10th Hussar.

They certainly needed some compensation because they had a hard life. While other soldiers had to rise at 4.30 a.m. the hussars had to start earlier and look after their horses. Their training was inhuman, they rode for hours and hours, with and without saddle, with arms crossed in front of their chest to acquire a perfect balance. Their behinds were bleeding and their pants had to be soaked off once the blood congealed. At least one peasant boy used his pistol to blow his brains out, - he just could not take any more and Father too contemplated to get out of it by self-mutilation.

In addition to being the best dressed Hussars in the Austro-Hungarian Army, they were also expected to charge on horseback with nothing but their colourful uniforms and shining sabres against the Russians who had the sense to use machine guns. Two out of three Hussars died in that first attack, four fifths in a subsequent attack. As luck had it Father stayed behind due to a combination of knowing the right people, illness and bribery. He survived while many of his comrades did not.

Neither did his favourite uncle, Jenő (Eugene) Kellner, who became the first Hungarian officer to die in the Great War of 1914-18, during an attempt to save one of his injured soldiers. He left a widow and three small sons to be compensated by a small pension and a gold medal.

It is not correct to say that Father was penniless. When he joined the army he was a salesman with a plumbing supply company, who had such high regard for this 22 year old, that they paid him a retainer throughout the war, on the understanding that he would carry on with them after the war finished. It was ironic that at the outbreak of communism in 1918 the firm was closed down and Father could not rejoin them, although he kept their catalogue as a memento all his life.

His parents had nothing. Originally they lived in the village of Nagyperkáta (and on the outskirts of that, called "Gypsy Town" to suggest that it was the worst area), in a house which had no glass windows. During the summer the "windows" were open, but during winter they were filled up with similar mud from which the whole house was built.

Grandfather had very little education, but my Grandmother came from a "better" family and was better educated. He was a big, good looking man, commonly known in the village as "Beautiful Paul". She was small and totally devoted to her children and her spendthrift husband, who was more interested in being beautiful than in providing for his family. They had four children, but only two survived more than babyhood, in spite of the fact that contrary to the practice of those days, my grandmother refused to give her babies brandy as a pacifier to stop them crying!

There is no doubt about their son being their favourite child. On one occasion Grandfather bought a new horse (he was forever trading-in his own horses, while contracted to the Army to supply horses to them as did Mátyás, my great-grandfather) and young Józsi happened to be sick in bed. He nagged his parents, wanting to see the new horse and wanted to get up to visit the stable. To save arguments and to ensure that

their son will be satisfied, his father brought the horse into the house. Spoiling children is obviously not a new fad.

My grandmother was reputed to be a very resourceful and intelligent woman. She was also long suffering and hard working. She must have realised that her husband cannot be relied upon to keep the family going and has set herself up in business. She purchased apricot and plum brandy in bulk from some of the illicit backyard distilleries, refilled them into tiny bottles and sold them to the peasants between 3 and 4 in the morning, as they went off to work in the fields. They banged on her door, she gave them the bottle, which they knocked back in one gulp with the result that the burning taste wakened them and made their daily tribulations easier. She waited for them to finish, reclaimed her bottles and refilled them again in time for next morning.

A famous story about Beautiful Paul is his visiting his 20 years old son (my Father) in Budapest, who wanted to make the old man's visit to the big city memorable by taking him to the cabaret. When he noticed the "risque" pictures outside the restaurant-cabaret, Grandfather was reluctant to enter the place. Eventually my Father-to-be and his friends won the argument and the group of 7 or 8 sat down at their reserved table close to the stage.

It wasn't until the second half of the performance that one of the dancers called down to Grandfather: "Hi, Uncle Paul, how are you, we haven't seen you for months!"

My grandparents were actually called Kellner Pál and Katalin, nee Deutsch. As it happened, grandfather's name was really Bernát, but obviously he did not like it and called himself Pál. Thus three generations of men were Kellner, Kálmán and Colman respectively.

With the exception of the boys of the late First Lieutenant Jenő Kellner, who retained their name all their life, we knew of no relations who were called Kellner and thus it was quite a surprise to my brother and I to read in 1981 that Sir Alexander Korda was born a Kellner, in a village not 100 kilometres away from Nagyperkáta where my grandparents lived and my father was born. It turned out that while my father knew that family as being related, not until we showed him the book about the Korda brothers, that we worked out our connection and a distant relationship with them.

Father received only the minimal education the law prescribed. He left school at the age of 14 and earned his keep from then on. He read everything he could lay his hands on, and became extremely well informed on all matters: technical, engineering, agriculture, accountancy, politics, you name it. At the same time he was never a know-all, on the contrary, he invited people to explain things to him.

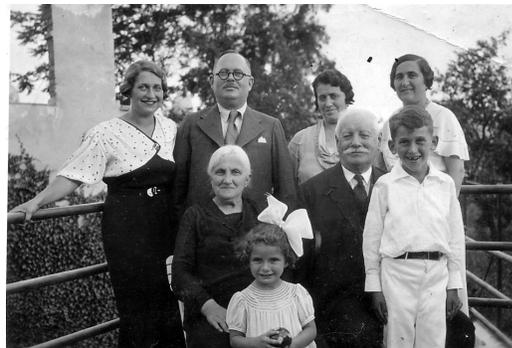
He was interested in everything that furthered his knowledge and kept learning and enquiring to the age of 89. In spite of a deficiency in spelling he developed a calligraphic handwriting style which stood him in good stead later. By the time he was 24 the army picked him to become a telegraphist and sent him to be trained to Vienna. In today's terminology he would be called a Telecommunications Specialist, - not bad for someone with almost no education.

After their wedding and a one day honeymoon in revolutionary communist Budapest, Mr and Mrs Joseph Kálmán moved into a flat into which, they and other families were sent by the authorities. Eventually it became their flat, (with only Father's parents moving in

with them), but in the meantime they were lucky to share it with others. They had no income, the only thing they had was the dowry which Father received, after signing an approximately 30-page agreement prepared by my maternal Grandfather's solicitor.

The dowry was supposed to have been quite considerable, but in fact was insufficient to start a business and thus Father had to borrow money from his brother-in-law to buy some bankrupt stock of hand tools. His decision to buy these, without permission, so upset his father-in-law that, in accordance with the agreement, my Grandfather insisted that the dowry be repaid. While the arguments went on, the business became viable and Father could borrow from his Bank to repay the dowry. Inflation then set in and while Father eventually repaid his debt to the Bank at a time when the whole loan could be equated with the cost of a box of matches, the repaid dowry in Grandfather's hands was invested badly and lost its value.

To house the stock of hand tools, Father opened shop in a basement and commenced to sell his hammers, spanners and nail punches. Paul László, his sister's husband, who was in a similar hardware supply business, left his job and joined him. They were partners and they remained so for twenty years, when due mainly to family intrigues, they decided to part. In spite of the bitterness accompanying the breaking up of a very successful business and



partnership, there was never any recrimination between the two ex-partners, and I never heard Father speak of his brother-in-law and ex-partner in a way which could be construed as not complimentary. In spite of this, for years they did not speak to each other and competed in business with the intention of driving each other out of same. The photo shows my Grandparents with members of the László family with my Mother and me.

While partners, they complemented each other so well, that this must have been the major ingredient of their success. Paul, according to my Father, was the hardest working person ever; totally honest and reliable, while requiring the initiative and push that my Father supplied with great gusto and a lot of noise. It was usually Father who had the ideas and closed the deals, which Paul carried out. While Father flitted all over the place, Paul worked and worked. While Father traveled abroad on company business and on his frequent trips to relax, Paul stayed home and slaved away. This did not go unnoticed by Father's sister, who constantly told Paul that he was being exploited. In this she was aided by Paul's children, who further resented my Father's interference into their lives. One could only sympathise with the "children," who at that time were either married or have graduated as doctors of law.

There was also the competition between the two wives, - my Mother and Aunt. If one bought a new hat, the other had to have one bigger and brighter. When we built a house on the "Hill" the other family had to buy a house there and move into it earlier than us. Thus it was not surprising that the partnership was being undermined by the two wives and the children. (My brother and I are innocent. We were too young, but had we been older, we could not have remained uninvolved.)



During the duration of the partnership Kálmán & László flourished. They specialised in supplying all types of hardware to agriculture, and eventually became the largest in their field. Initially they imported spare parts for agricultural machinery, and later commenced importing specialised agricultural machinery mainly from Germany. Eventually, they commenced manufacturing machinery, such as hammer mills, which were designed on their instructions by young engineers, who eventually became leading academics in the

agricultural machinery engineering field. Although originally copied from a German machine, with various improvements their hammer mill became the most advanced in any country and is still being manufactured in both Hungary and elsewhere, with very little change in design.

In partnership with Ohrenstein & Koppel they established a manufacturing organisation in Czechoslovakia and had a selling organisation in Romania, while their machine was manufactured under licence in Germany by O&K, who are now the largest makers of escalators and roadmaking machinery in the world

In 1938, to the delight of solicitors they parted. All their employees went to either one or the other partners, usually after a lot of intrigue and at increased salaries. The two new organisations, with Father alone running his, and Paul, with his son and daughter and future son-in-law working in the other firm, competed against each other and were successful in enlarging their share of business. Their new businesses were established not 150 yards from each other, in a city of one and a half million, and it became a rule of the two families not to pass in front of the other's business, in case using the neighbouring streets might be regarded as an act of spying.

Relations inviting one or the other family soon got used to the idea of not inviting both families at the same time, and in view of the fact that my paternal grandparents by then lived in Budapest and were visited by my Father every day without fail, a routine was worked out to ensure that brother and sister, and especially the two sister-in-laws never met. I used to visit my grandparents for many years at least 3 times a week, and cannot remember ever meeting my two cousins, who were probably visiting them just as often.

My grandfather had gout and sat in an armchair most of the time. He could hardly walk and had to be pulled up from his chair. This was done by my Grandmother, who was almost half his size, but who was determined to look after him, in spite of him being bossy and rude to her.

Both my grandparents were intimidated by my father. He always hated smoking and he must have been the pioneer anti-smoke campaigner. For health reasons doctors suggested that Grandfather cut down his cigars to 2 a day, but Father went one better and simply forbade him to smoke.

My grandparents knew when their son will arrive for his daily visit and thus a great effort was made to ventilate and perfume the flat prior to his arrival in order to get rid of the incriminating smells. They didn't fool him and in fact, realising how much the cigars

meant to his old man, Father used to give me money to buy some cigars for him, on the understanding that I do not divulge where the finances for my generosity came.

Even in her late seventies Grandmother Kellner was a very hard working intelligent lady, while my grandfather was and remained a lovable rogue. Everybody loved him in the neighbourhood, in spite of his immobility. Their flat was on the ground floor and he used to sit at the open bay window and make friends. No good looking girl between the ages of 19 and 40 could pass by without speaking to him and they seemed to enjoy his company as much as he enjoyed chatting them up. Right up to his death at 82 years of age he had an eye for the girls.

He must have been a chip off the old block because his father, Mátyás, or Matthias lived to be 94, which was particularly remarkable due to the fact that at the age of 91 he fell out of a window, which happened to be on the fourth floor.

This great-grand-father of mine lived with his daughter on the 4th floor of a building of flats and one day locked himself into the toilet. When he could not open the door, he tried the window and succeeded to fall into the ventilating shaft. On arrival to ground level, he must have fallen on to the rubbish accumulated over the years and this must have cushioned his landing.

After a while the toilet door was demolished to find the window open and that the old gentleman disappeared. They rushed downstairs fearing the worst, but he was not there either. Finally they found him in the nearby park where he was being entertained by the maids and governesses walking the dogs and the children. It was only some weeks later that they found out that he broke an arm in this escapade.

By the time I was born in 1926 my great-grandfather was not alive and thus I missed out meeting him. However, I did meet my maternal great-grandmother, whom I remember being as frightening as her reputation. As far as grandparents, I knew my mother's stepmother only and of course, I knew my father's parents well. Grandfather Paul died in 1941, while Grandmother lived till she was 87 and died in Hungary in 1949, by which time my Father, who absolutely adored her, lived in London.

She lived for the last 4 years of her life with her daughter and son-in-law, Father's ex-partner, in Budapest. At the time contact between England and communist Hungary behind the Iron Curtain was extremely difficult, yet my Father found some ways to send them money towards his Mother's upkeep, which did not cease when she died. Not until both his brother-in-law and then his sister passed away, did the regular financial assistance stop, although Father and his sister were never close.

My Kellner grandparents were interesting people and coped quite well with their two children, who were less than friendly with each other, yet shared the cost of their parents' upkeep. There was never any remark on their part as to the family feud, nor did they attempt to interfere. This is quite atypical of Hungarian parents, although having a family feud is anything but.

Around 1940 my grandparents celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary and in view of my grandfather's immobility a big luncheon was organised in their flat, at which all the factions of the two warring families actually shared a meal. Great care was exercised in the seating arrangements, so that they did not require to speak to each other.

It was not until 1941 when my cousin George died at the age of 29 after a short illness (meningitis), that a sort of a relationship was re-established and contact between the two families approached normality.

HUNGARIAN HISTORY

Between the two wars, Europe was busily re-organising itself. Hungary was a Kingdom without a King, run by Admiral Nicholas Horthy. The fact that Hungary had neither a Navy nor a sea, and that its non-existing Navy could sport a solitary Admiral only, was typical of a country, which in its over 1000 years of history, invented and tried a variety of political ideas. Thus Hungary had communism almost before the Russians, fascism almost before Mussolini, and they certainly had anti-jewish legislation before Germany or any other country.

To be fair to the only Admiral landlocked Hungary ever had: until 1918, the Austro-Hungarian Empire had access to the Mediterranean Sea, had a viable Navy and that Navy was commanded by neither a Prince nor an Archduke, but Admiral Horthy a Hungarian nobleman without even a title. Whatever his other mistakes, we must accept that he must have been quite outstanding to become the first and last Hungarian Commander of the Austro-Hungarian Navy during the latter part of the war.

While the Great War of 1914-18 was fought, Hungary was the junior partner in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. They were allied to Germany and Turkey against the might of England, France, Russia and the United States. They lost the war and the Allies commenced to dismantle the power and territory of their enemies, whom they regarded as the guilty party in the whole affair.

Germany had to forgo the right to have an army and Kaiser William went into exile. Heavy repatriations were crippling the German economy and soon inflation on a previously unheard scale finished off ruining Germany. At the time Germany had a democratic Government, but being made completely bankrupt, was readied for the extremes of Teutonic and Nazi ideology. Dictatorships usually arise on the economic ruins of the country and Germany was not to be an exception.

The Versailles Peace Treaty was supposed to bring peace with Germany, while the Treaty of Trianon dealt with Hungary. It was certainly intended to deal a death blow to Hungary. In fact these Allied dictated treaties caused most, if not all of the problems in Europe, which in 1939 resulted in the next war.

Austria and Hungary had to give up territories to newly founded countries. Most of Poland and Romania, all of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (with the exception of Serbia) used to belong to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Now they became independent and hostile to the truncated Hungary, which they encircled. Austria became a small landlocked country as did Hungary. There were no harbours left for them to ship produce from, nor to have a navy.

Hungary was treated in a particularly harsh manner losing well over 50 percent of its prewar territory. The leaders of the Allies and especially President Wilson had no interest in finding out about Hungary and how that small country bled in the interest of the West over the centuries guarding Europe against the Moslem Empire or how Hungary itself was subjugated by the Austrians. The allies were more interested in creating new allies for themselves by rewarding the newly established countries that encircled Hungary in anticipation of providing "peace for ever" in Europe.

The Hungarians were not only hard done by, but felt betrayed. No wonder that almost immediately after the war, an "irredentist" movement swept Hungary, which was later used to unify the country under Horthy's rule.

Austria became a Republic, while Hungary remained a Kingdom, with the ex-Emperor of Austria as its King. However, even before the Habsburg King Charles could take up residence in Hungary a Bolshevik revolution led by Béla Kun brought communist rule for Hungary. The Communist Peoples Republic of Hungary was short lived and the leaders of the revolution fled to Lenin's Russia.

The communists were in a minority and could not consolidate their rule, before it was opposed from both outside and within the country. It was the Allied powers who were not too enthusiastic about Bolshevism in Hungary and therefore they allowed and encouraged the Rumanians to occupy Hungary. Finally it was Admiral Nicholas von Horthy de Nagybánya, who came to power in 1919, when with the help of the French and English and the Rumanians, he arranged communism in Hungary to come to a bloody end.

People disappeared at the time, many were summarily executed, other were simply murdered. Horthy's regime was called the "White Terror" which took over from the "Red Terror" of the Communists. Because some of the Reds and Béla Kun were Jewish socialists, when Horthy took over, thousands of the victims of the White Terror were Jewish, whether they were Communists or not.

Even after the wide spread pogroms in which hundreds of Jews lost their lives, have ceased, the Horthy Government had an official anti-Jewish policy, whereby anti-semitism was tolerated and encouraged. No Jew was allowed to hold a position in the public service or be an elected politician and Hungary's Parliament enacted the first anti-Jewish legislation in Europe, according to which University entrances were restricted to Jewish students on the basis of their own and parent's religion.

Horthy's rule was not unwelcome. The Communists made a mess of running the country, they tried to change too many things too fast. Horthy seemed to bring a stability to Hungary which was most welcome after the Great War and the subsequent troubled times. He organised elections and although these were neither secret (in the country areas) nor free (only certain parties were allowed), the resulting Government of Count Stephen Bethlen was attempting to be conciliatory and has been instrumental in re-building the countries economy.

The Red Terror of the Communist rule was followed by the White Terror during which many more became killed as before. Yet Horthy became a king-like father-figure, who appeared to be the arbitrator, who was benevolently overseeing the country's re-emergence as an important nation in Middle Europe. In actual fact he was always in control and his will was carried out by his friends and colleagues in the ministries.

He established a new order, based on medieval knights and called an order of the "vitéz". Any person who fought in the war and received certain standards of decorations could apply to become a member of the "vitéz" and if accepted, he could use the "vitéz" prior to and as part of his name. Before a person was accepted, he was investigated by police and the army as to the racial purity of his forebears and his political past and present and only if absolutely non-Jewish and 100% reliable to the Government, was he allowed to take a solemn oath pledging his loyalty to the person of Admiral Horthy.

The orphan or the eldest son of the "vitéz" on attaining the age of 21 could apply to become a member of the order in his own right, and if he could show the same political reliability as his father before him, he would also join the elite. Officially, there was no material advantage in becoming "vitéz" but in actual fact introducing one self with the prefix of "vitéz" ensured an advantage, since belonging to the order demonstrated to everybody that the person enjoys the patronage of Horthy and vica versa. In this way, Horthy was getting a large number of loyal followers, who have all pledged themselves to support him and his regime.

In later years, the White Terror gave way to a more peaceful situation, where even if democracy wasn't actually practiced, there was an opportunity to live without fear. It was still not possible to speak without fear, but at least internment camps (invented by the British in South Africa, used by the Hungarians, but eventually improved by the Germans, whose camps like Dachau were to become infamous later) were kept going only for the so-called enemies of the Nation and also some unemployed gypsies, whose music was the favourite and official music of Hungary. However, chief amongst those interned were the Communists, who could be kept there for 10 - 15 years without trial, in 'protective' custody.

While there was a quota system in Universities to restrict Jews from becoming students, nevertheless Jews were allowed and encouraged to work, make money, give employment opportunities, export their produce and talents, and pay taxes, bribes and offer contributions to the Government parties. They were referred to as Hungarians if they were famous musicians, industrialists, painters or film makers. If they were not, they were tolerated, but if they were poor, they were referred to as bloody Jids.

As Admiral Horthy said to my Father in my presence in 1943: "We should be proud of our Hungarian Jews. (He actually said: Hungarian Jids, i.e. "magyar zsidajaink".) Do you realise that they built the film industry throughout the World?"

My Father respectfully agreed with the great man, who omitted to mention that only the previous week he signed a regulation that made any Jewish man who has or continued to have sexual relationship with a gentile female liable to life imprisonment or that he ordered the decimation i.e. the execution of every tenth sailor on a ship he commanded in 1917.

Hitler came into power in 1933, some years after Mussolini. The first foreign visitor he had was Colonel Gyula Gömbös, the Prime Minister of Hungary, who started to talk about an Axis between Berlin and Rome. This was eventually established and Hungary became an important ally of the two Fascist powers, who arranged the return of some of the territories which were taken from Hungary after the 1914/18 war. In exchange Hungary gave the Germans and Italians their un-diminishing loyalty, which included more and more anti-Jewish legislation from May 1938 onwards.

The first of these limited employment of Jews in businesses to 20%. Further anti-Jewish laws included defining the status of Jews, forbidding them leading positions in the media, prohibiting the issuing of new trade licenses or the renewal of old ones. Further admission of Jews to the professions was forbidden, as was their right to acquire citizenship by naturalisation, marriage or even if born in Hungary of non-Hungarian parents. Voting rights of non-native Jews was cancelled and to be able to prove that you were a

Hungarian Jew you had to show that all your forebears, if Jewish, were permanently resident before 1868, i.e. for the previous 70 years!

To find your forebears, and where they lived and died, became quite a business, in more ways than one. In our case, Father engaged a "genealogical investigator" who found that all of our forebears had the decency of having been born in the right place. It was all very satisfactory except for one rather shameful forebear, whose gravestone was found to be outside the cemetery walls and with an inscription disclosing that under that stone rests the ex-Roman Catholic vicar and his wife, with an obviously Jewish maiden name. It appears that our forebear was a priest who fell in love with a Jewess, married her and must have been excommunicated for having broken his vows of celibacy. Little did he know what problems he caused to us five or six generations later!

It became pretty obvious to anybody but the blind, that being a Jew would be more and more a hazard to enjoying a normal life, although no one could dream of the holocaust that was to follow. Nevertheless, every Jew was trying to find ways and means to ensure that whatever may happen, he and his family would get by with the minimum of trouble from the authorities.

Some decided that assimilation was the answer and became Christians. It was thought at the time that all you needed to do was to register as a member of a non-Israelite religion and all would be well. My Father was of this opinion, and we became members of the Roman Catholic religion sometime in 1937.

It is easy to say so many years later that this was a cowards' way to deal with the situation and nothing, but nothing could be further from the truth. For a Jew to become a Christian, in the hope that he and his family may survive with less persecution, was a greater sacrifice, than to do nothing. No one but a Jew can understand the anguish of the Jew who gives up the religion, which while he may not practice it or he may not even believe in, was the faith of his forebears.

Only someone who experienced it can understand the anguish of my Mother who had to get the signature of her Rabbi and his permission to 'desert' her faith by becoming a Catholic. He did not make it easy for her when he asked her how, after her betrayal of her ancestors, will her conscience allow her to visit her parents' grave.

We became members of the Roman Catholic Church but it did not give us any benefit in the years to come. Nor did the conversion of my parents make any difference to them, - my Mother continued to read her Miriam, her prayer book, light candles on Friday night and to visit her Synagogue, while my Father continued to send money to the Jewish congregation, which was his way of keeping up religion. At the same time he insisted that he believed in God but not in religion.

I was the only member of the family, who really became and acted as a Roman Catholic, by going to a Catholic School, attending Mass and becoming an Altar Boy. For a short while I was a believer, but this stage of my life was brief and I reacted with a life long suspicion of religion of any kind, yet I always believed that if only the teachings of all the churches could be followed, without the trappings of religion and without some of its practices, the world would be a better place.

QUO VADIS ?

By 1938 every forward thinking Jew who could afford the train and boat fare and the bribe that had to be paid to receive a passport and the permission to emigrate, had either emigrated, or was preparing to do so. My family obtained visas for Uruguay or Colombia or Honduras, or was it Venezuela? In any event, we didn't go.

Instead, on the 14th January 1939 John and Father went to England, and a fortnight later I was sent to Switzerland. A lady, who made a living as a minder of travelling children, accompanied and delivered me and a number of other children to the various schools in Switzerland. The idea was, that my Father would arrange our immigration to England, return for Mother, come and collect me in Switzerland and we would all finish up in England. This is not what actually happened.

I was 12 and my brother John 18 when we left Hungary. He went to live with an Anglican Rector, in Maulden Rectory, who later served in both the RAF and in prison, the latter for interfering with little boys. (Never with John, he assured me.)



I went to the French-speaking part of Switzerland, to Champery, where I lived in the Ecole Alpine, in great luxury, and learned French and skiing, and how to use knife and fork the Swiss way. I hated it considerably less than my other educational excursions in German speaking territories, but than no one minded my being Hungarian or Jewish, especially because I was a Roman Catholic. As such, on Sundays I attended Mass in the picturesque church of Champery and in May

1939, I was confirmed in the catacombs of St. Maurice by a charming Bishop, who could talk a few words of Hungarian.

While I was in Switzerland my Mother came to see me and also to bring with her some of her jewels and omit to take them back to Hungary. This was one of the ways my parents arranged for their valuables and money to be smuggled out of Hungary. Thus she and I parceled up a diamond brooch of hers and posted it at the post office of the small Swiss village, well insured, to John in England, who instead of the parcel received a note from H.M. Customs and Excise, assessing the diamonds in the brooch for duty at something like 400 pounds sterling (of the 1939 kind). John had heard of some extremely rich people, but never of anyone who had that much money.

John wrote to our parents with great care, so that the censor who might read the letter would not understand his problem. My Father rang me in Switzerland and, shouting loud enough that I could hear him without the phone, explained the situation as best as he could without giving away too much and advised me that the parcel I had helped Mother to wrap would be coming back and that I should hold on to it, until he gives me other instructions. Our conversation or shouting match, had to be rather circumspect, because Hungarian censors were listening in on all foreign telephone conversations, and one was often interrogated afterwards, and had to explain what certain statements meant. We must have done well, because I got the message and the censor did not.

The diamonds returned from London and I asked Herr Honegger, the Head Master to keep it for me. Eventually I had a letter from Father saying that I should not forget to send a birthday card to Mr. Walders, the Managing Director of the Swiss subsidiary of Ohrenstein & Koppel, the German Company who were manufacturing Father's Medicago hammer mill in Berlin. I re-addressed the parcel and sent it off to Zurich.

The rest of the story races ahead of time:

All during the war, every now and then every member of the family had to recite the name and address of Herr Walders, so that whoever survives can claim the diamonds. In 1947 my Parents left Hungary for London via Zurich, hoping to do just that.

They wrote to Walders several letters, hoping that one will arrive safely. On arrival to Zurich, they found a car awaiting them from the hotel, but no news of Walders. After a sleepless night, worrying that Walders might do the type of: "What diamonds?" deal which became quite common place in Hungary amongst some people who accepted valuables for safekeeping and were so disappointed that the Jewish owner survived that they suffered a lapse of memory as regards the goodies.

Next morning Father rushed to Herr Walders' office, where he was greeted politely by Walders, whom he never met and who spent the next hour offering Father his sympathy on his terrible war experiences and cups of coffee. Finally, after about an hour, during which Father became more and more nervous and irritated, Walders asked the reason for the visit. Father said: "I came for the diamonds" to which Walders replied: "What diamonds?" and thus confirmed Father's worst fears.

Father, mustering all the calmness he never knew he possessed, and using his atrocious German knowledge, explained that he is after the diamond brooch that was sent before the war for safekeeping from Champery by his son, but Walders simply could not recall ever having received any diamond jewels from a young boy he never knew on behalf of a Hungarian he never knew either. Finally, more for the purpose of proving the truth of his statements, he called in his long serving secretary, who could not recall things either, but suggested, that maybe it might be worth having a look at a small parcel that has been in the company safe for a number of years and which she sees sometimes, but never knew what it was.

Walders, the secretary and Father went to the other office, where the safe was standing, wide open and for everyone to use and there was the unopened small parcel, with my childish handwriting and the original postage stamps still on it. When it arrived seven years ago, Walders, who only knew from my letter that he should keep the parcel for my Father, put it into the safe and promptly forgot it. Had the secretary not been there, the diamond brooch would still be in an unlocked safe in Zurich to-day.

After Mother's 1939 visit to me was over she returned from Switzerland to Budapest and in July of that year Father traveled to London to see John and finalise our visa to England. He was not successful in arranging permission for us to go there, so he decided to return to Budapest, after leaving strict instructions to John, that if he asks or even instructs him to return to Hungary, John should regard this as having been done under duress and therefore under no circumstances should he return. At that time war was still unimaginable and Mr. Chamberlain was still making agreements with Herr Hitler in Munich. There was to be peace in our time, but my Father knew better.

Before he left London, Father also wrote to me, telling me that we shall probably immigrate to Brazil. Hearing this, I decided that if I have to go to Brazil, I may as well spend the summer in Hungary first, and asked M. Honegger, the headmaster of Ecole Alpine for my ticket, which he gave me and I took off for Budapest. I changed trains in Montney, Montreux and Lausanne, got to Zurich at 12 midnight, walked the streets all night and walked across the City for another station, from where the Orient Express was going to Budapest. I was 13 years old and while in a toilet in Zurich received the first and only homosexual offer of my life. Not having been subjected to gay liberation propaganda, I am afraid I threatened the poor little man with the police, who disappeared immediately.

Boarding the train, I felt very lonely and rather frightened of the prospect of traveling alone through Nazi Germany. I did remember that on my way out of Hungary the wife and 14 year old daughter of Mr. Pick, who was Mr. Hungarian Salami, were taken off at the border and returned in tears after a humiliating body search for non existing jewels. Now I was to travel all alone through the same area.

Ostmark, formerly Austria and now part of Nazi-Germany, was full of soldiers, SS people, swastikas, guns and policemen. If there was anything else there, I certainly did not see it. I was tired from my night of walking the streets and would have loved to sleep my way across the German portion of my trip, but could not as I was frightened out my wits and also I had the sorest chapped lips I ever had before or since.

I was all alone in the train compartment until at the German border an SS officer and his wife joined me. They realised my plight, produced some cream for my sore lips and looked after me until Vienna, when we said a friendly good bye. They were the only nice Nazis I ever met, but in spite of this I am glad I did not meet him again, when his solution to curing a sick boy could have been to put him out of misery with methods other than the cream his wife provided for me, a very frightened 13 year old.

After a 40 hour trip I arrived to Budapest, engaged a taxi and just about caused my Mother to collapse from surprise when I bowled in asking for my taxi to be paid. My Father was to arrive from England next day, but he had more sense than to travel via Germany, and after crossing the Channel he went from France to Italy, then Yugoslavia and finally Hungary. I traveled next morning to a railway station some 30 kilometers from Budapest, awaited the train from Yugoslavia, boarded it and went through the various sleeping carriages until I found him shaving. After 8 months he was happy to see me.

To his credit he did not throttle me then, although he has probably never forgave me to spoil all his plans by uni-literarily leaving Switzerland and returning. Had I stayed in Switzerland, he and Mother would most certainly have left Hungary before war broke out two months later, but my unscheduled return has caused plans to be thrown out of gear. There was another attempt to get me out of Hungary, but that was also frustrated, and I never made it.

My stay in Switzerland lasted only five months but I believe it to have been a very important portion of my upbringing and subsequent development. The atmosphere at the college was extremely free and easy and without knowing what democracy is, I was part of it. The teachers were our friends and the pupils of the college responded. There was a

co-operation between the staff and the pupils, which was all very new and very impressive to me.

Our teachers worked and played with us. One of them was an excellent ice skater and he competed in the 1936 Winter Olympics. In spite of his fame he could be seen fooling around with us boys on the ice and yet he had the respect of all the kids in the class room.

We had a lot of opportunities to ski. Near the Ecole Alpine were several fields ideal for skiing and we had our run every day right up to May, when the snow disappeared and the green grass became speckled with the millions of flowers, a vision which will never leave me.

During our holidays, pupils either went home or we were taken away from the college for a change of scene. Thus Easter was celebrated on the mountain in a ski hut, while in June we were taken to Zurich to see a large Expo type exhibition.

Our Easter holiday was unforgettable for more than one reason. We climbed up to Planachaux, a walk which took us 9 hours in 1939, but which would take 10 minutes some 30 years later, by which time the "teleferique" cable cars were in operation.

Our getting to Planachaux was "le grande aventure" in itself. We had to pack up a bag, which was to be taken to Planachaux by the cable on which an open platform hung. Our luggage, food and other supplies were tied onto this primitive platform, set up to take building materials to the site where the cable car towers and the stations were built.

We were carrying a rucksack and our skis and stocks and the skins which were tied onto our skis. The skins were strips of cow skin and fur stretched onto the underside of skis. The long hair of the skin allowed the skis to slide downhill, but if pointed uphill those same hairs grabbed the snow and stopped us from going the same number of steps forward as back. It certainly helped us to get to our destination which was a one room hut and which was all of Planachaux!

There was also a lean-to shed in which our straw palliasses were stored during the day. At night they came out and were laid out on the floor and the thirty or so people bedded down on them. One wall of the hut was where cooking took place and the oven was kept going day and night, using the wood we collected during our skiing expeditions.

One night a spooky thing happened. We were all asleep when almost all of us heard a cry for help. The kerosene lamp was turned up and many of us got dressed and went outside. It may have been 1 a.m. and while we were shouting about and hoping for an answer, we were not allowed to go on a search with some of our teachers, who got their ski and torches and went off to find the man or men who were in trouble.

Most of those who were left behind went back to sleep, but once again, around 5 a.m. we were wakened by cries of help. We all heard clearly the man shouting that he needs help, that he has money and that this money is of no value to him. We discussed amongst ourselves what the shouts about the money meant and came to no conclusion. We certainly heard it correctly, because later, when our teachers returned from their unsuccessful search, they confirmed that they also heard what was said. Later in the day, two French border guards (Planachaux was right on the French-Swiss border) arrived and they also heard those same cries.

We could not find the lost man and it wasn't until we returned to Champéry after the holiday, that we read in a paper, that the bodies of smugglers, who were carrying large amounts of money, was found. The date when they disappeared was the same day we heard their cries of help. There was no doubt about it, these were the same people. The unbelievable and spooky part is that the smugglers were found on the border of Italy, some 150 kms east of Planachaux!

I WAS HAVING A HOLIDAY

Instead of enjoying my summer in Budapest, as I imagined and hoped I would, I had to commence studying for exams in respect of the year I lost at school. My studies in Switzerland were not acceptable and I was to sit an exam for all my subjects in September just a few days before the regular school year was to commence.

While in England, Father arranged for an English exchange student to come to Hungary. He was supposed to stay with some of our relations who had two sons keen to learn English. However, due to my unexpected return to Hungary plans were changed as Father decided that my needs to learn English were greater. So John Bell, a 19 year old student from Oxford, who was reading history and was planning to become a diplomat as his father and grandfather before him, came to us for his 1939 summer holidays.

We were all supposed to learn English from him, but his Hungarian improved much more rapidly. I did pick up a few words which I subsequently forgot and the main thing I learned from John Bell was his method of making his bacon and eggs and spooning the hot lard from the bacon over the eggs. His method of using the back of the fork to put the semi-liquid egg into his mouth was fascinating and impractical. It was also considered by us quite hazardous.

He spent a lot of time with some of our relations who were the same age as he was and whose interest he shared. They took him out often and obviously he enjoyed their company much more than the turmoil of our family. His presence at the dining table did not stop the arguments which were conducted in a language strange to him and at a sound level, that must have been even stranger. It must have been quite embarrassing for him to sit in at the shouting matches conducted between my parents. I am sure that he never heard anything like it in his sheltered life.

He came from a "good family" yet his one and only pair of pyjamas were full of holes. My mother was quite shocked. How can a young English Gentleman, (those days all Englishmen were "Gentleman") possess just one wreck of a pair of pajamas. She bought him two pairs and while she was at it she bought some socks and arranged the darning of his pants and the jacket, which already had leather patches at the elbows. Father was furious and accused Mother of having fallen in love with John Bell, some 26 years younger than her.

When in the first week of September the British Embassy suggested to John Bell that owing to the political situation he should return to England, he must have been quite relieved to leave Central Europe and the crazy family he had the misfortune to encounter. He has probably tried to explain to his family where he spent the last summer of peace and his experiences, but no doubt, seeing that no-one believed him, he gave up.

During that summer, every afternoon one or another of my teachers from my school appeared at our house and attempted to teach me the subjects I was to sit in exam. They traveled up the hill in the chauffeur driven car Father sent for them and they came, taught me, enjoyed the afternoon coffee and cakes and then returned to their homes.

Needless to say that under the circumstances I was not interested in acquiring such skills as reciting German poems, in the language, which I spoke very well indeed, or to learn

about Hungarian history or geography, when the teacher in charge of the subject was being fed and paid by my Father. You did not need to be Einstein (who was then still alive) to know that the teachers were being paid not just to teach me, but also to ensure that they are going to assist in passing exams. The mentality of those days and that part of the World was, that everybody was on the take from waiters and bellboys right up to the teachers and of course almost all the politicians and the civil servants.

DURING THE WAR

I WAS AN UNHAPPY SCHOOLBOY.

A few days before my exams the war broke out. I listened to the radio with my Father and one of my teachers as Hitler screamed his threats to the World. My Father suggested that he was afraid that his son will get involved in the forthcoming war. Mr Árpád Bölcsházi thought that he is a pessimist, after all the war will be over before the English will want to call up foreigners into the army. He thought Father was talking about 18 year old John in England, but Father explained that he was worried about his 13 year old. He was not a pessimist, but a realist in some respects. Not so in other respects.

In spite of all my teachers being on the payroll, the exams were conducted by strange examiners and it seems that my teachers were not sharing the fees they received with these people. I failed three subjects, which happened to be two more than I could fail if I was not to repeat the whole year.

Father thought that the discipline of a college would do me good and I was sent to a Catholic College. It was ironic, that whereas before I had to travel some 65 minutes from our house on the Hill to my school, the college I was sent to live in, was only about 5 minutes from my home. Not that it mattered, because we were only allowed to leave the college once a week and than only if we deserved it.

The college was very glamorous. We had a smart military cadet looking uniform and on special occasions we even had sabres. This was the limit of the glamour. The rest was sheer agony. I was beaten by teachers, pupils, priests, punished by these people and nuns, at times it must have seemed that I was the star attraction at the Sadists Convention.

My first beating came about three days after school commenced. My "house" was under a priest, with a German sounding name and who during study hour asked me to come and see him after dinner. I did so, asked to sit down in his study and he asked me a lot of questions about Switzerland, about my Parents, wanted to discuss with me matters concerning politics, matters concerning my racial origins, asked me to volunteer being an altar boy, gave me a book to learn all about it, asked me to take my pants off, bend over and with his cane gave me 12 of his best. He then suggested that I sleep on my stomach and bid me good night.



To this day I do not know why I was beaten by him, nor could any of my class mates and fellow inmates explain to me what has happened. Surprisingly, I never had any more problems with him, but then I often served him at the altar and always made sure that he had two refills as regards the altar wine.

About a fortnight afterwards, we were studying in the study room, when someone came in to ask for a boy to go to the recreation room. He came back crying. Another boy was asked to go out. He also came back somewhat worse for wear. Eventually my turn came.

In the recreation room it was pitch darkness. I was grabbed, something was tied around my eyes, the light was switched on and my face was slapped and I was beaten by at least half a dozen 17-18 year olds wielding canes, brooms and wet towels. Being blindfolded added to the terror. When they decided that I have had enough I was admonished to keep my mouth shut and was told to respect my elders and obey them without any questioning their authority. Then it was time for me to go back to the study room where the supervising priest continued to ignore what was going on.

During the next two years the number of organised beatings that I would have enjoyed had I been a masochist could not be counted on hands and feet. The amazing thing in retrospect is that these beatings were known and could not go unnoticed by the priests and the Reverend Head Master, yet they never said anything about it nor did they try and stop it, in spite of the fact that some kids were beaten so badly that they had to be nursed in the college hospital by the nuns. It was quite obvious that our priests approved of these sadistic and cruel beatings which were premeditated and had been arranged for no reason other than to satisfy the sadistic tendencies of some of the older pupils.

Additionally, there were the unorganised beatings. There was one 18 year old who could kick your behind with such force and artistry, that the pain made you sick and another one specialised in slapping faces. They did it in pairs, one kicked you and the other slapped you and their attention could come at any place any time, on the corridor of the school, on the way to chapel or in the bathroom. One of these fellows joined the army soon after and within a week or two died a hero's death, having been run over by a tank or truck. His memorial service in the church of the school was a happy occasion, all my fellow pupils having been his victims.

Interestingly, I never complained about the beatings parents. I must have been going through a heroic my life or else I realised that they would not believe was a time, when you heard of the great sufferings our soldiers endured while subjugating the Czechs, Slovaks, Serbs and Rumanians and it would have completely unpatriotic to complain about such matters. Some of my own class mates, while discussing the nastiness of our elder schoolmates, think of revenging it on our torturers, but were looking forward to beating the next generation of victims.



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Being beaten was not the only unpleasant part of the college, although it certainly made other discomforts pale in comparison. Our day started with having to attend mass. Some of us even had to get up earlier so that we can serve as altar boys. It seemed to us as if most of the priests would have received their daily alcoholic fix from the wine they used while celebrating mass, but that was unfair. After all it was before breakfast and they were looking forward to more wine and even stronger alcoholic fortification during the day.

We were not religious. Neither were most of the priests. They were chosen by their parents to become priests and thus have a life without the problems which peasants, clerks, labourers etc may have. Most of them were sent to become junior brothers at the age of 12, most of them became fat, overeating, drinking and who knows what else they

were indulging in. They were supposed to be celibate, but we knew of some of our teachers who were seen in strip joints, - I myself saw one of the younger ones in a cabaret, wearing a bright tie, over which he was putting his dog collar. I must say that the nuns were religious, kind and helpful.

We also had to attend litany in the evening. Once the bell sounded for evensong we had to observe absolute silence until after breakfast next morning and this silence had to be observed even if being kicked by older pupils. If not, the noisy one was punished, not the kicker.



Once a year the whole school went into "retreat". Four days were spent in absolute silence, without any school work or study, other than studying religious matters. Usually we were allowed onto the playground of the school to kick a ball around on the asphalt grounds, but not during retreat, when

physical exercise was sacrificed to aid our religious fervour. We spent the whole morning and afternoon in church listening to the ravings of our priestly elders, without any change in our daily attendance of the morning mass or the evenings litany. Why these people imagined that we need that much religion I cannot say, - their example was certainly no help in our becoming religious.

However, we enjoyed our retreats for the amusement these priests gave us. One of them, the Bishop Tihamér Tóth stands out in memory as having a loud booming voice which he used at full blast to paint for us the dangers of masturbation. Quite apart from the loud noise he made from the pulpit, which made sleeping almost impossible, most of us were too interested in the subject to miss a single word of his. He went on and on, which we did not enjoy, but described not only the extreme dangers, but also the action in great detail, which we enjoyed hearing. His lectures were full of worthwhile subjects and it is from the Bishop Tóth that I received my first sex education.

The good bishop also wrote several books on the subject, which were compulsory reading for us. Unfortunately, they were not illustrated, but they were, just the same, the best porn available to us in college and if those books made the Bishop a wealthy man, his success was deserved.

The other priests, who came to talk to us were not into masturbation as much and specialised in other subjects, such as heaven and hell. Mostly hell and the fire and the terrifying eternal suffering and pain and more hell and fire. The question occurred to us, as to how these people could know about these terrible happenings which will befall us, when they have never been on the other side themselves and must have been obvious to the most primitive of priests that the "retreats" were successful in sowing the seeds of disbelief in little boys like us. I can say without exaggerating that not one of my class mates emerged after the days of brain washing believing more or becoming more religious.

We slept in dormitories. There must have been 60 beds in each. In the middle there was a horse trough type of concrete tub with some 10 taps and shower rose above and on each side, for 20 kids simultaneously. This was all highly inconvenient as the taps were so high that some of the smaller could not even reach it and to wet one's toothbrush without being soaked was absolutely impossible. There was no other way to have a wash, no way to use warm water, except in the showers, to which we had access in rotation, once a week. I must confess, that I went through my two years without once having a shower, - I was petrified of somebody discovering that I was circumcised.

Luckily for me I was suffering a great deal from dermatitis (I wonder why?) and the doctor prescribed salt bath's. The only bath was in the sick bay or hospital, where the nuns were ruling the roost and here I was quite safe even in the nude.

In our dormitories we were inspected by the priests throughout the night who came and walked through shining their torches and checking on us. Beside our beds we each had a cabinet which contained our slippers and all of our personal belongings we were allowed to keep close to us. This excluded our underwear and clothing, which were kept in a different building by the nuns. We were allowed to have two uniforms, one to wear during the week and the other to parade in on Sundays and while out of the college.

The method of changing over from one uniform to the other was as antiquated and designed to cause the most inconvenience as all other portions of our regimented life. The night before our having to wear our best uniform, we had to go to the building where the nuns lived and where our clothing was kept. Long queues formed to pick up the uniforms, collarless shirts and the hard celluloid military collar together with our hat and white pigskin gloves. In winter our overcoat was handed to us also.

Having picked up our dress uniforms, we had to store them in predetermined order on the foot of our beds and next morning we had to dress and deliver the school uniform and our dirty washing to the nuns. This took up to 45 minutes again and sometimes we got soaking wet while running across to the building where we had to queue to be dealt with by the nuns.

We were not allowed out of the building unless we were picked up by a parent on a Sunday morning. If we were not deserving this privilege, we found out that we cannot go at the time when our parents were ready to sign us out. There was no reason why we could not have been told days earlier, except that this method was more cruel and allowed us all to be terrorised right up to the time when we got out of the building.

When my cousin died, my Father rung the College Principal, the Reverend Gáspár and the saintly gentleman immediately agreed that I should be allowed to attend the funeral. I was called into his office, but it was his secretary who advised me that a cousin of mine died and that I should get dressed in my uniform and be ready to go to the funeral. I was not told which cousin died and I was neither consoled nor counselled. I could have been advised to go to a party with the same tact as I was told to go to my cousin's funeral.

By the time our chauffeur arrived to pick me up I was ready, except that I was not allowed to go with the chauffeur, it was only parents who could pick up their sons. I could not contact my Father because I wasn't allowed to make a telephone call and I was not allowed an audience with the Reverend Principal, because he was resting. Finally, after telling me that George died, our chauffeur had the good sense of driving back for my Father, who had to drop everything a few hours before the funeral, get to the school and

sign me out. During this period I sat on a chair on my own at the gate mourning my third cousin and friend, George Graf. Not until we were at the cemetery did I find out that it was my cousin George László who passed away.

My Mother went through my two years without once visiting the school or the college. She absolutely refused to have anything to do with it. On the other hand my Father came to collect me every Sunday morning and sat in the Chapel on the balcony through Mass. On more than one occasion he signalled to me what the war situation really was and I well remember the Sunday in June 1941 when the Germans invaded Russia. Looking down at the congregation and his uniformed son, Father went through the motions of wringing the neck of a chicken and I knew that something unpleasant is happening to the Germans. I did not realise that it is the Russians who were at the receiving end, whereas my father immediately saw that the involvement of the USSR means the hastening of Germany's defeat. The entry of USA into the war, following Pearl Harbour was signalled by Father in the same fashion some months later.

Even though the Germans and Japanese were attacking and winning and the Russians and Americans were retreating, for Father everything including all territories being occupied by the Germans and Japanese meant just a step towards the inevitable victory of the Allies, or us. At no time during the war was there any question where our total loyalties were, the Allies certainly included us.

It was quite interesting for me to be in both camps every week. On Sunday I was in the camp of the Allied and very secretly listening to the BBC. The rest of the week I was bombarded by the news from the Hungarian Radio, which was more pro-German at that time than Radio Berlin. The priests and almost all the pupils were intoxicated with the German and thus Hungarian victories and since quite a lot of the kids were either relations or even children of Generals and Ministers and MP's it was advisable not to barrack for an allied victory while at the college.

Due to the fact that not all the priests teaching me were being paid to look after my marks, I did poorly and thus it was no surprise that I was going to fail a few subjects at the end of my second year in that institution. I was called in to see the priest who was responsible for my class and told that I will fail that year. I said that I was planning to leave school that year, an offer which my teacher could not refuse.

When later that year I received my results and found that I had not failed, I had to stand by my agreement and thus called a taxi, got some mates to help me carry out my mattress and linen and arrived home. Mother knew that this will cause drama and indeed it did. Father was having a nervous breakdown when he realised that once again I arranged things without consultation with him. There was no way in which he could make the school take me back, especially as I have even disposed of my school uniforms, having sold them to the small tailor opposite the school, who made a living buying up the uniforms of the outgoing students and recycling them.

That summer holiday I was to spend working in the factory, where Father's Medicago hammer mills were being manufactured. The factory was two and a half hours away from our luxurious home on the hill, I had to get up at 4 a.m. to get there. I got home around 7 p.m. After a while even Father saw that his 15 years old son deserved better and allowed me to quit.

The rest of the holiday I had to spend with an escaped French Prisoner of War, who was spending the days with me and was supposed to return to the internment camp in the evening. The idea was that I should practice my French, but he found the maids in the neighbourhood to be better pupils, so they saw more of him, day or night.

Father had no difficulty in finding the right contacts to get me back into the same school where I spent 3 years before I went to Switzerland. In fact the living standard of the teachers must have dropped considerably during the years I was not there and Father did not pay for their assistance in getting me through exams without giving me an education.

The method of education was shocking, even for those who were interested. At the end of class the teachers advised us which portion of the book has to be learned and then next time they called up one of the pupils, who had to recite what he learned, his marks were noted and when the class was nearly over, our teacher again advised us what we need to learn for next class and that was education in most of the subjects. It was surprising therefore, when a good teacher, could get a bad pupil to do well. I had one teacher who taught mathematics and algebra and he was interested in getting me to understand things. Thus I became quite interested in mathematics, - probably in the top 3 in our class. In latin, history, even German, which I spoke almost perfectly, I was an utter failure and refused to learn my poems or dates or vocabulary.

In all fairness, the method of teaching could not be entirely at fault as regards I am concerned. Sitting with me in the same class listening to the same teachers were pupils who have done better than I did and became scientists, doctors, musicians, etc. One person in particular should be mentioned here as having benefited from the education I regarded and still regard as being wrong for someone like me.

John Kemény was a classmate of mine and I clearly remember him as being outstanding in all the subjects we were supposed to learn. He left for the United States in 1939 and after the war we heard that he was involved in the development of the atom bomb as a mathematician, - at the age of 17. Later he became Albert Einstein's assistant and in 1962 as Professor of Mathematics at Dartmouth, he and another Professor devised the BASIC language for computers. Because of this he is regarded as the father of micro computing as the development of the BASIC language enabled microcomputers to become a popular reality.

Thus he and I shared the same basic education, - we just used it in differing fashion.

LULL BEFORE THE STORM

These were war years and the Hungarian Army had started to get involved in the war. To their surprise they found that there was more to war than harassing the population in occupied territories. Having marched through Poland and into Russia behind the all-conquering German Army, the poorly equipped Hungarians could only act as occupational forces and to guard POW's. They were also great in terrorising the population and torturing the Hungarian Jews, who were called up into the Army, given a yellow armband and a soldier's cap (with the Hungarian emblem taken off it) and sent to Russia, with even less clothing and supplies than the regular Army.

The lives of these Jewish men in the labour battalions was sheer hell. They were starved, overworked, tortured, mistreated, and they froze and died in their thousands. The Army officers and privates who were in charge of them were either cruel to them, or were punished by being sent into the line as being unsuitable for the task they were given. In some cases, members of these labour battalions were sprayed with water in minus 25 temperatures, freezing instantly. In at least one case, some German soldiers fought and shot some Hungarian army people trying to save the Jews from being mistreated. These Hungarian soldiers were there to get the most out of the Jewish labourers and were nothing short of being sadistic guards. No soldier was ever court martialled for causing the maiming or death of a fellow Hungarian, if he happened to be a Jew.

No wonder that whenever a Jew could get away and join a Partisan group he did so. Not many could. The Russian underground did not recruit its partisans amongst starving Hungarian Jews and they were kept in areas where contact with the population was almost impossible.

When the Russian winter offensives started to take their toll on the Germans, they realised that they needed all the gun fodder they could muster. Therefore they decided to allow the Hungarians, Rumanians and the other hangers-on to fight in the front line. Being badly clothed, and equipped even worse, they were an ineffective fighting force, and within days of joining in the defence of occupied Russia, the Hungarian force was almost completely wiped out. The Hungarian Army was destroyed on the banks of the Don river, while the Rumanians found their nemesis near Stalingrad.

It was thought that as long as our Admiral headed our Hungary, we Jews would be safe. Sure, there were some who were in labour battalions in Russia, but after all weren't the Hungarian soldiers in Russia also? At least no one shoots at the Jew. How would we have known what was happening to those forced labourers in Russia? There was no communication between the inhabitants of the labour camps of Russia and their relations in Hungary, except rare messages brought illegally by the soldier-guards, who were bribed to call on the wives and parents, and who were not about to explain the terrible times their victims were having in faraway frozen Russia.

All this time Budapest was almost untouched by war. People ate well and often; the restaurants with their gipsy music continued to attract the inhabitants of Budapest who had plenty of money. Even the Jews of Budapest enjoyed the quiet before the storm and if there were some stifling regulations against them, these were regarded as the Hungarian Government's way of satisfying the Germans.



I continued to holiday with my Aunt and Uncle in the village of Szölösgyörök and with Eva, we spent a lot of time yachting and sunbaking on the beaches of Lake Balaton.

As far as the situation in Hungary was concerned, it was realised that in comparison with some other areas in Europe we in Hungary didn't have it too bad. Sure, there were regulations about the percentage of Jewish employees any company could employ, but you could always employ a Jew and pay him in cash. No Hungarian Jew needed to be hungry, and all the news about Jews being shot in Poland and Russia were just rumours, - or were they?

Whatever our problems, they were an acceptable portion of living in a war. It is the extras, which only some people experienced that made us feel insecure. For instance in the summer of 1942 some acquaintances in their early twenties organised a summer holiday camp for some 18 or 20 young people. Our ages were between 12 and 17, and we went by train to a small village not far from Budapest where a peasant's house was rented for us. We were happily enjoying the fresh air and long walks when on the 2nd day of our stay 4 gendarmes arrived and asked what we were doing there and what our religion was.

After hearing the answers, they gave us one hour to pack, made us pick up our luggage and with bayonets fixed and the four of them surrounding us, marched us through the village to the station, waited till the train arrived and sent us back to Budapest. There was no regulation or law which did not allow a bunch of teenagers to have a holiday in the country, but seeing that the gendarmes told us to leave our prepaid holiday meant that we had to go. There was just no argument, nor would we have dared to make one.

My mother's cousin, Andrew Pór, came back from Russia, where he was in the Army, not as a labourer but as a sergeant. Due to an administrative error, he was not recognised as being racially inferior, and he wasn't about to argue about being a sergeant instead of being mistreated as a forced labourer. He showed us photographs of Polish Jews floating in the Vistula; he told us about seeing thousands of Jews being driven into the forests, hearing the shooting and no one returning, even told us about the mass graves. We did not believe it, Cousin Andrew Pór was always a bit of a lad for making an impression.

It could have been uncomfortable to realise what was going on around us. It was so much easier to believe, that it couldn't happen to us. In any case even the pessimists had to agree that things in Budapest could not have been better. It was rumoured that Polish born Jews and those who escaped from Poland were rounded up and sent back to Poland to stay in camps, but however much this may be regretted, it was understandable, and in any case, what was the difference between being in a camp or in the ghetto or in hiding. It would not last long, the Germans were going to lose soon.

It was in the summer of 1943 that having worked during my school vacations in a ball bearing factory, (where I was actually paid a wage,) that I had my first holiday on my very own. I was 17, going on 25 and looked older than my age and was not only trying to act older, but succeeding at it. I joined Leslie Pór, a second cousin of mine at a holiday resort on Lake Balaton and when I was not mucking about with girls or playing poker I was getting high on red wine.

Balatonlelle, where we stayed, was full of young fellows like me and the not so young wives of the men who were being mistreated in labour battalions in Russia. Not that we knew what was going on 3000 kilometres to the east. The fact was that we were there, and we were available, and all of us were in a hurry to live our lives. It might end sooner than we thought.



Soon after I returned to Budapest, where I had to serve in the Fire brigade, Father was asked to supply a silage chopper to the Royal Farm.

Forever the PR man, he suggested that maybe Admiral Horthy, the Regent of Hungary might like to see a demonstration of this machine. To every one's astonishment the outrageously cheeky suggestion was accepted, and the demonstration became an official happening. The Kálmán lot consisted of Father, myself and Agocs, who started with us as a chauffeur, became a spare parts packer, then a demonstrator, storeman, chief of the warehouse, and in 1944 I arranged for him to be appointed Managing Director of my Father's Company.

Arriving at the Gödöllő Royal Farm, with the assistance of a large number of farm labourers and with the help of a number of farm overseers, the three of us set up the chopper, driven by a large tractor and as soon as that was ready we were briefed by the various officers on how we should line up on the arrival of His High Excellence Admiral Horthy and his wife. About an hour before the appointed time, some more dignitaries arrived and finally, preceded by motorcycle escorts, riding in a majestic Horch car arrived the Regent, with his wife, two Aide-de-Camps, both Generals, and followed by a car load of police. In fact the police outnumbered all the others on this visit he was making not in enemy territory, but on his farm. The Regent and the Generals and other officers were in their best uniforms, only Peter Agocs and I were in working overalls, but we had no speaking parts.



It was at this demonstration of the Robur, later to be manufactured in England and renamed Robust, that Admiral Horthy explained his pride in Hungarian Jews. He seemed very interested in the machine and in the silage making process and only concerned that the cattle which were consolidating the silage walking over it should not contaminate it.



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When it was time for him to go, he came over to us and shook our dirty hands and thanked us very politely for the demonstration. He also spoke to the farm labourers, who happened to be Croatians, addressing them in their own language.



While saying good bye to Father he instructed his farm manager to get another machine for his private farm at Kenderes, and invited Father to come and be present when it was installed. In fact three weeks later, another meeting took place between Horthy and Father, at which not only his wife, but also the young widow of his late son, were also present.

Horthy's son died on the Russian front piloting a fighter aircraft. He was the Deputy Regent of Hungary and groomed to take over from his father. It was immediately rumoured that his aircraft was "doctored" to crash, since the Germans were not enthusiastic about Horthy's attempts to establish a dynasty. After the war Father had dinner with his widow in England, where she lived, married to an English officer.

A few days after the excitement of rubbing shoulders with the Regent of Hungary, I developed a nasty cold; it became pneumonia, pleurisy and finally a lung ailment. As I had a heart problem as a child, it was thought that I was lucky that no further heart troubles developed, but I was sick enough to have had to retire for a three months period into a Sanatorium on a mountain just outside Budapest. It was one of the happiest periods of my formative years.

There was peace and quiet and a purpose in my life. All I had to do was to put on weight, and in this I was assisted by daily injections and very good food. I was also enjoying the attention of all the many friends I made on my holiday at Lake Balaton, and I became good friends with my Mother's stepbrother, who by that time was a communist and had spent some time in prison, due to some literary effort which was less than popular with the authorities.

Luckily, he was prosecuted instead of put into an internment camp and forgotten and after being convicted, he was sent to prison. Due to influence by my father and also due to his lung problems he served his time in the prison hospital. When not in prison he was a clerk and a contributor to literary magazines but he also spent long periods in hospital. He thus understood my worries about my own illness, which we feared might develop into tuberculosis. He was a very gentle fellow with a high intellect, who had always been interested in me and who was always interesting to talk to. He treated me an equal and I appreciated it.

My step-uncle Zoltán was probably the only member of our family with a real interest in politics and with a political conscience. He was also very knowledgeable as regards history and thus it was no surprise that in August 1939 on hearing that Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia signed a non-aggression pact he forecast that the next step will be a war between Germany and Russia. We had to wait almost 3 years, but his forecast became a fact.

His visits to me in the sanatorium were always most informative because he could explain matters to me in terms which I could understand and learn from. That he was guiding me towards socialistic ideas was obvious and as all of 17 years old, I was quite ready for such ideas, even if I was not ready to go to prison for my beliefs.

Also in the same sanatorium was a well known poet, Gábor Devecseri. Although he was an "old" man of 28, we became quite friendly and I enjoyed his company, his poems and his stories. I was busy writing poetry, which he criticised cruelly. After the war he became really famous and he died in his early forties suffering from lung cancer.

By February 1944 I put on sufficient weight and was well enough to return to the fray by rejoining my parents in Town and returning to school. Since 1941 we lived in a flat on the Pest side of the City, having let our home on the hill to Kálmán de Pataky, a famous opera singer, who paid his rent seldom, but when he did we had to pick it up in person from the ticket office of the Royal Opera House, where the rent was awaiting us together with 2-3 first row tickets.

Pataky lived in our house with his wife, various maids and butlers and his father-in-law, Oszkár Beregi, a well known classical actor, who happened to be Jewish. In the stair case of our old home hung some of the wreath' the famous tenor collected throughout his travels and amongst them was one from a certain Herr Adolf Hitler, with a large swastika on its ribbon. Little did Hitler know that the main aim and object of hanging his wreath was for the purpose of allowing an elderly Jewish Shakespearian actor sleep more peacefully, believing that Hitler's name on the ribbon will save him.

Pataky managed to leave Hungary even before the war ended and the family travelled to Argentina where he was as famous as in Hungary and Germany. Eventually he and his family settled in Hollywood and it was from there that his wife brought her husband's and father's ashes back to Hungary in 1983 to be buried in graves donated by the Hungarian Government.

OCCUPATION

It was on the morning of Sunday, March 19th, 1944 that I answered the telephone. The strange man introduced himself as Uncle Gábor and told me to get in touch with my Father immediately, and tell him that what he discussed last week had now happened. Click. The telephone went dead.

I rang Father, who was at the same swimming pool he visited every day for some 30 years and told him the cryptic message from the strange man. He told me that both Mother and I should stay at home until he got back. Within 20 minutes he was back home and told us that the man was General Gábor Gerloczy, the senior ADC to Horthy, and that the message meant that the Germans had either occupied Hungary or were in the course of occupying it now.



So that was that, the Germans have occupied Hungary. What's next?

What really happened was that Horthy was invited to another visit to Hitler. When he arrived at Hitler's HQ in his Admiral's outfit with a small silver dagger on his belt, the first ominous sign was the invitation of the SS Officer that he should take off his belt and leave it in the cloak room. Hitler was at first quite friendly, but eventually he started to shout at Horthy about how Hungary wasn't pulling its weight in the sacred war against the Russians. Finally he advised Horthy that the German army had occupied strategic places in Hungary and the action will continue until the whole of Hungary is secured. Horthy decided to leave and asked for a car to go to his train, but Göring arranged for a make belief air raid, and thus immobilised Horthy's train until such time that they could check how the occupation of Hungary was going.

It went well, and without a bullet being fired, they took over the country. Some days earlier a lot of German students came for their holiday to Hungary, also a lot of German soldiers happened to be travelling through Hungary to Russia and occupied Yugoslavia. There were also a lot of other soldiers seemingly returning to Germany, who were also in transit through Hungary on this March Sunday. All these Germans who were accidentally in Hungary on that day, suddenly acted and occupied predetermined points throughout the country and mainly in Budapest. Simultaneously plane loads of SS arrived at various airports in Hungary, and of course the Hungarians did not fire on their allies.

In the city, German patrols took up their positions. Some occupied the radio station and transmitter, others guarded the railway stations, while the ministries and army offices were all surrounded by SS tanks. By midday the country had been taken over completely. By the time Horthy returned next day, he had nothing else to do except to accept the resignation by phone of Prime Minister Kállay, who has taken up refuge in the Turkish Embassy and appoint a new one, who happened to be the appointee of Hitler.

For us there was nothing to do but to wait and we did not have to wait long.

In less than a week regulations were gazetted in the papers and stuck on the walls of buildings. Jews must not leave their home between the hours of 7 p.m. and 7 a.m., must

not travel in cars, must travel in the rear of trams, must not go further than 5 kilometres from their home, must not shop at times other than between 3 - 4 p.m., etc. All cameras and radios owned by Jews had to be delivered to the nearest police station, (where police made a list of all those radios, which were capable of being tuned to the BBC). All jewellery, gold or silver and all pocket and wrist watches owned by Jews had to be delivered to the nearest bank, where receipts were given.

Of course not all regulations were carried out by the Jews. Some had already hidden their valuables, some began handing their valuables to gentile friends, who were to keep them until "it's over". In our case, we already had a very large cache of gold (1002 sovereigns and about 4 kg of gold) buried in the courtyard of my uncle's house, where there should be no danger of bombs or other risks associated with possible fighting, (or so we thought). Various gentile friends, customers, employees, etc were now approached by Father to hold in custody various other valuables. Some (certainly not all) actually returned these to us after the war.

There were many more regulations, but none as insidious than that which ensured that every one knew, who was who, and ordered Jews to wear at all times a 10 cm large yellow star, which must be sewn firmly onto the left side of every jacket, overcoat, pullover, etc. In case there might be any doubt, the population was encouraged to report any people, who while wearing their "mark of shame" did not act in accordance with the regulations.

The newspapers and special magazines began their campaign of anti-semitism by feeding unbelievable rubbish to their readers. Jews were described as monsters who killed gentile children to use their blood in the unleavened bread of their Passover. It was printed in papers that Jews raped blond Aryan girls and murdered them as part of their religious dogma and also because it is their favourite pastime, and because they had exploited the population difficult conditions resulted. The war, the shortages of materials and food was all due to the misdeeds of International Jewry, directed by the Churchill and Roosevelt, both of whom were described as Jewish.

Thousands of prominent Jews disappeared as soon as the Germans take over Hungary; hundreds were tortured by the Gestapo. One of the most notorious places in Budapest, where Adolf Eichmann and other SS organisations operated was the same Sanatorium, where some weeks ago I recuperated. Some of the Jews in German hands disappeared without a trace; some reappeared in internment camps run by the Hungarians, some were made to pay huge sums of money for safe passages, only to find themselves in Bergen Belsen instead of the Switzerland they were promised.

Some prominent Hungarian Jews were sent to Turkey to negotiate with the Allies for the supply of 1000 American trucks in exchange for all the Hungarian Jews, an offer which at 1 truck per 900 Jews was considered too high a price to pay. In any case, who the heck wanted 900,000 Jews? The offer made was rejected by the Allies and the delegates who were sent to Turkey, returned to Hungary, to face Eichmann's fury.

A few days after the initial lot of regulations, more are published: All Jews, who were not permanent residents of Budapest were required to return to their homes, while certain areas in Budapest were declared Ghettoes, where all the Jewish population had to move.



My cousin Eva was faced with having to travel to her village to join her parents. Mother thought she should stay with us, while Father was too

frightened to suggest anything other than what the regulations dictated. Mother later accused him of causing Eva's death in Auschwitz.

Almost daily new regulations were announced. The food rations of Jews were reduced. No Jew was allowed his own business. All Jewish-owned businesses had to be managed by an Aryan. No Jew was allowed to work in other than manual jobs, and than only if they did not hold a superior position to a Gentile.

We happened to have lived in an area and in a house where Jews had to congregate. Within a few days we had to take in as many as 15 additional people into a flat which had 3 rooms in all, including the bedroom. By that time Father was in prison, and soon after I was to be mobilised into the army's labour service.

GROWING UP FAST

In early April 1944 I was still at school, supposed to matriculate in June. However, by mid-April Jews were forbidden to go to school, which was the first and last of the anti-Jewish measures which had my wholehearted support.

Rumours abounded, and one of these suggested that females who were married need not go to forced labour camps. Thus the greengrocer in our block of flats approached Mother and asked for my hand in marriage, - to his daughter. Without inspecting my bride to be, whom I never met, I declined the honour.

Another rumour was that as long as you were an apprentice you'll be allowed to finish your course. It was decided that I should become an apprentice lathe turner and Father and I went to the appropriate Government department to obtain their permit.

That was the first day when we had to wear our yellow star and obviously we were apprehensive about the reception we shall get from people on the street. The reaction was not easy to perceive as it was almost non-existent. People looked at us with some curiosity, but we were ignored and every body kept away from us. We were relieved to note that there was no hostile reaction to us, although we heard later that in some other places there were attacks on Jews by extremists. However, on that first day even we, who mercifully were ignored, definitely noticed a distinctive gulf between us who were marked with the Star of David and "they" who used to be our co-patriots and who suddenly regarded us as lepers.

I become an apprentice turner in a small factory. Mother sewed on another yellow star onto my overalls, we found a canvas satchel to hang across my left shoulder to carry my lunch in and I was ready to become a turner. My job on the first day was to stand beside the lathe and watch the foreman turner turning and listen to his verbal diarrhea about matters concerning the bloody Jews.

Just before evening I was instructed to warm some water and pour it into a basin. My boss washed his hands and face and invited the other four working for him to do likewise. When they had all finished he spat into the water and advised me that the water was now mine to wash myself in. Instead of water I washed my hand in kerosene.

The next day was just as instructive and the water was being spat into just before it was my turn to wash myself.

The third day my boss didn't realise that I spat into the water before he washed himself in it. Just the same he delivered his spit before my turn came and thus I continued to use kerosene to clean my hand, which caused a severe case of dermatitis.

One evening as I returned from work I found Mother hysterical. Earlier that day two gendarmes came to collect Father and took him away to a small village, where he had "decentralised" some of his agricultural machinery stock. In spite of the fact that the gendarmes assured Mother that he was not being arrested, the reputation of the fascist gendarmes was such that they struck terror in even the innocent.

After he had spent three days in a village lock up the gendarmes brought Father home. Without them he could not have traveled on a train.

He explained to us the reason for his problems. Many months ago the Ministry of Industries circularised all agricultural machinery manufacturers and importers and instructed them to store all important, difficult-to-replace components away from Budapest, to protect them from bombing raids. Father took lorry loads of ball bearings, plough shares and all sorts of other materials to several farms, and in one case stored some ball bearings in the disused cellars of a vineyard.

Everything was above board, but someone saw the lorry arrive, and remembered it after the German occupation, when people were encouraged to report anything which seemed secret, unpatriotic or strange. The gendarmes investigated, and deduced that they had unmasked a huge Judeo-capitalist-communist conspiracy and were in any case interested to visit Budapest, hence their taking of Father into custody. They were quite hostile when the magistrate accepted his explanation and refused to prosecute him.

However they must have received new advice and a few days later they returned, and this time they arrested Father and took him to the prison in the township of Eger. He was housed in solitary confinement, and it was only a couple of days after his arrival in prison that he could send a message to us as to his whereabouts. By that time I was spending money and engaging the help of non-Jewish connections in trying to find him and getting things moving to free him from jail and was working on how we can send him food.

Just as Father was arrested, the latest regulations prescribed that all Jewish businesses must be taken over by a non-Jewish business or person. Action had to be taken fast, because a number of Father's competitors had put themselves forward to the authorities as being the best people to take over Father's business, including its assets, all of it for nothing. I myself had discussions with 3 or 4 competitors, who came looking for Father, but found that he was in prison and an 18 year old boy is in charge. They seemed sympathetic, but really all they were interested in taking advantage of the situation.

I realised that I had to find somebody to take over Father's Company, who was on our side and could be trusted. Somebody suggested Peter Agocs, our erstwhile chauffeur, who was then a corporal in the Army. I contacted his wife, somehow we contacted him, and he came home on compassionate leave. I explained that I would like him to "take over" the firm and he agreed. The next thing was to get him out of the Army, and Father's kind patron General Gerloczy obliged by pulling the necessary strings. Next Agocs put in a bid to become the General Manager on behalf of the State of the firm of Kálmán József, which was successful as I gave him the money to bribe the person whose responsibility was to appoint the new Managing Directors of Jewish enterprises.

He came back into the office, sat down at Father's desk and told me that he was successful and he also told me that things would be different from now on and would I please keep out of the office in the future. This was somewhat disappointing, coming as it did from somebody who was supposed to have been in the Kálmán family's service most of his life and who knew the dire straits we were in, but we were used to that sort of disloyalty.

However, Agocs was more cunning than I gave him credit for. Later that day he appeared at our home, with some money for us and told me that he would do everything for us, but we must appear to be remote from the business, so as to keep him out of trouble. He kept his word and was a true friend throughout this period.

Just the same, having been thrown out of Father's office earlier that day without the opportunity to remove some valuables and money, which were hidden in the cellar of the office amongst some agricultural spare parts and not being absolutely sure of Agocs' loyalty next day, I sneaked out of our flat and ran all the way to the office.

It was dark on the streets, there was a blackout and it was in the middle of the curfew imposed on Jews. I did not wear the yellow star, and if I would have been stopped, I would have had no excuse. I got to the office and let myself in. There, in total darkness, I descended into the cellar by climbing through the lift well, found some of the valuables, but not the money, and returned back to our block of flats, where once more I hid them, this time tied onto the lid of the toilet cistern. Over the next few days I sold some, while the rest were picked up for safe keeping by some Gentile acquaintances.

If Father being a jailbird was not enough, one morning at 5 a.m. two policemen, armed with rifles with bayonets affixed, came for me and I too was arrested. Mother was out of her mind, and of course neither I nor the policemen knew why I had been arrested. We all thought that my arrest is connected with Father's "crime". I was taken to a police station and from there to the school where I was no longer allowed to continue being a schoolboy.

It turned out that I had been arrested because I did not attend the pre-Army youth training. I explained that because of my racial inferiority I was not a member of the youth army (levente, i.e. similar to the Hitler Youth organisation), and in any case I was a member of the Fire Brigade, which was a substitute. They agreed that bringing me in was a mistake, but did not release me until a few minutes before curfew. In the meantime, Mother packed my clothing, blankets, food, etc, went to the police station and finally traced me to the school, where I found the food that she brought me very welcome.

Being in the Fire Brigade was not particularly pleasant. We had to serve the same way as the professional firemen, except that we did not get the same equipment, and for us it was a side line. I spent lots of nights waiting for a good fire and some of the times my patience was rewarded. One night we were involved in putting out some fires after an air raid. It was quite dangerous, and while our face and body were guarded by clothing, being left out our ears were cooked in the heat.

We were also confronted with the victims of the air raid and while I always felt happy when Budapest was bombed, I could not help but be sorry for the dead and injured and in spite of my pleasure of being bombed I was frightened when the bombs were falling. Any action by any of the allies against the fascists was welcome by us, even if it endangered our lives. We were much rather at the receiving end than noticing no action at all.

The town of Eger, where Father was incarcerated, was some 150 km north of Budapest. My Father's connection with Eger was that he was the supplier of most if not all the machinery requirements of the huge farm owned by the Roman Catholic Bishopric, which was the single biggest industry of Eger. After a few days in prison, Father was able to send a message to the chief farm manager, who in turn advised the Bishop of the illustrious prisoner, albeit racially inferior, in the local prison.

The Bishop, who may or may not have met Father, but who must have been a man of compassion and courage, then arranged for their solicitor to visit the prison, and Father engaged this kind, old and rather sleepy gentleman to defend him concerning whatever

crime he would be charged with. The Bishop also instructed his staff to ensure that Mr Kálmán received food from the kitchens of the local hotel.

With all this attention, the prison authorities realised that they had an important guest and while they could not move Father from his solitary cell, they gave him a day-time servant in the shape of a young gipsy, who happened to be in prison for armed robbery. They also allowed Agocs, when he arrived in his Army uniform, to visit Father and spend a day with him in his cell.

After a while the prosecutor started to ask questions, and the official written charges were formulated and given to him. They were quite simple, Father was accused of sabotage, because he had hidden ball bearings and other material required for Hungary's war production. His defense, that he was instructed to remove the materials was not accepted, because it referred to agricultural machinery parts only and in any case he did not report the location of the material he removed from Budapest, where it was endangered.

Sabotage in time of war carried the death penalty, and you did not have to be Jewish to get the rope in Hungary.

Back in Budapest, I was busy in trying to amass a lot of cash which we felt might be required for bribes. I knew that somewhere in the cellar of the office there was a large amount of money hidden, which I failed to find on an earlier expedition. I was worried to ask Peter Agocs to try and find it and bring it to me. However well he behaved towards us, - you never knew. Finally, one night after curfew, I sneaked out once again, and using our old keys, I "broke" into our business and having had a torch on me, found and "stole" our money, which then had to be re-hidden in the flat.

With the help of General Gerloczy an agreement was reached with the Prosecutor in Eger, that he would ask for a life sentence only. The cost of the bribe was to be an amount equivalent to approximately \$3-4,000 at a time when the annual salary of that Prosecutor may have been all of \$1,000. The problem was how to advise Father that the Prosecutor had been bribed and would co-operate.

The solicitor from Eger wrote to us putting our mind at rest as to Father's physical well-being, but could give us little hope as regards his chances of being acquitted. However, he assured us that he would do his best at the forthcoming preliminary hearing which should take place 5 weeks after his arrest. Father's solicitor did not know of General Gerloczy's arrangement with the prosecutor either. It was getting very complicated and very worrying.

We arranged for Agocs to visit Eger again, to tell Father about the arrangements and to take some good clothing to Father for his court appearance and to stay in the town during the court hearing, which was to last two days.

The day before the Court sat, the German Gestapo arrived at the prison and asked for all Jews to be handed over. The prison authorities did so, but advised Eichmann's Gestapo assistants to come back for Father later, as he could not be handed over to them until he had attended the court next day.

It was at this time that all Jews outside Budapest were first concentrated in the confined space of local Ghettos and then, as rail trucks became available, were deported to Auschwitz for gassing and the crematorium, or work and probable death by starvation.

The Gestapo in Eger, with the active and enthusiastic help of the Hungarian gendarme and other authorities, came for the Jews in the prison to concentrate them in the Ghetto prior to loading them into the cattle trucks, which were ready to roll.

Had the court in Eger not required the appearance of Father next day, they would have taken him to in Auschwitz. Two days later they were not interested, for the transports had left and Messrs. Endre and Baky the organisers of the death transports were arranging the deportation of another town's Jews.

Because of delays in reaching Eger, Peter Agocs could not visit Father before his court appearance, although his suit and shirt reached him. The message that the Prosecutor had been bought could not be passed on to him and he was brought into court believing that he was fighting for his life. During the hearing he decided that the kind old solicitor was too polite and mealy-mouthed for him, and so Father sacked him, took over his own defense and to the surprise of the solicitor, the prosecutor and himself, proved his innocence, so that the judge declared him not guilty of all charges and set him free.

His next problem was how to travel back to Budapest, especially because by the time he was released the last train left. He finds that he was not allowed to stay in a hotel overnight, because no Jew was allowed the privilege of being a hotel guest. In any case he was the only Jew in the town of Eger, all the others having been deported.

To overcome their dilemma, Father and Agocs returned to the prison, where the kindly prison warden allowed him to sleep in his old cell, and even placed a second bunk in there for Agocs. Next morning, Agocs, who travelled in his Army uniform brought him back to Budapest as his "prisoner". His return to his family after 5 weeks of solitary imprisonment was regarded as an absolute miracle. But then those days were full of miracles and it seemed that every day alive was another miracle.

The day after Father returned regulations were posted, calling up all Jews, including those who were part Jewish or converted, from 18 to 50 to join as members of the infamous Labour Battalions. I was to leave on 5th June and travel to Felsőhangony, a place near the Slovakian border.

With the help of my cousin Bözsi, whose husband was in Russia and thus was regarded an expert, I bought the equipment required to become a slave labourer. The place supplying such outfits was believed to be the Scout Shop and after waiting in a queue of hundreds, we left with sufficient camping gear to make an assault on Mount Everest.

The night before my leaving, Father, who was convinced that he would be re-arrested, came to my room, woke me and told me that he and Mother had a discussion in their room, and they had reached the conclusion that the best way out would be suicide. I was told that Mother has sufficient poison for all of us.

I sat up and refused to do it. I explained that at least one of us should come through it all, and there should be somebody to tell John what happened. Father was crying, but he was listening. I wanted his promise that they would not do it without me, come what may. He went back to Mother and I could hear them talking. Finally, he came back to my room and gave me



their solemn promise. He sat on my bed until I fell asleep and we never again discussed this topic with each other, although other people have informed me that he told them about the night when I talked them out of our suicide pact.

Next day I had my last breakfast, then my last lunch. It was like the hours before execution. Finally, in the afternoon, it was time to get dressed. I put on my knickerbockers, steel studded boots, and my brand new camping attire. I checked once again to make sure that I had my photographs showing me with Admiral Horthy. They might come handy. I said my good byes to Mother, put on my huge rucksack which had my two blankets rolled on top of it. On my side hung a smaller side bag, and I had a small suitcase in each hand. The only thing I did not need to take was a hat. That would be the one of two items of equipment that my country would provide for me. A soldier's cap, with the Hungarian emblem removed from its peak and an armband, which will not be yellow, but white, to show that I am racially Jewish, but not of the Jewish faith. That is all the equipment I was to receive to go to war!

Father was planning to accompany me as far as the tram stop, so as to give me last minute instructions on how best to survive. I gave and received a final hug from my sobbing Mother and I left for hell knew what. Actually, hell came sooner than I had imagined. Loaded up like a mule, I stepped out on to the marble floor of the staircase outside the flat. My steel studs skidded and my feet went from under me. The huge weight of my rucksack brought me down backwards, and my head just about knocked the bricks out of the wall. However, it was only me who was knocked out cold for a few minutes.

When I come to I find my Mother crying even more, and being joined by Father. I went into a laughing fit or hysterics call it what you wish. I was reminded of the gipsy who on being taken to his execution on a Monday morning remarks that his week was starting all wrong.

Nursing a huge bump I boarded the tram for the station. It was full with my future comrades who were going to the same station. When we got there, it became obvious that the Allies have nothing to fear from a Hungarian Army, provided it was transported by



train. It seemed that nobody in charge had worked out that the 20,000 or so men called to go to the same Army camp, would require more than one train. After spending 4 hours waiting, about 18,000 of us were told to go home and come back tomorrow.

37 members of 711/101 Labour Company.

Only about 16 of these young people will survive the next six months.

(The writer is standing 5th from left.)

THE ARMY AND I

The train journey north was remarkable only in being a mobile rumour factory. It seemed that every body knew somebody who has heard something which was told to him by somebody who knew somebody who has heard it etc, etc. We traveled all night and most of the day to arrive to the steel making town of Ozd. From there we walked to our destination at Felsőhangony, a small village which formerly marked the border between Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

On our way we passed the boarded up windows of the ghetto houses in Ozd. From inside the locked up Jews shouted words of encouragement to us and we gave them news from the City. When we returned the same way some ten days later, the houses were empty, - the inhabitants having been taken to Auschwitz and were by then processed in the gas chambers.

As we approached Felsőhangony, we were met by the local gendarme, who were jeering at us while being pleased to see so many potential victims to make miserable and to fleece. They were not to be disappointed. In spite of us being under Army rule, the brave gendarmes could get their daily fun, by simply walking into the Army compound and kidnapping a few Jews to beat up and torture, just for fun. Their greatest pleasure was when they caught some of the wives, who traveled secretly to meet their men. Their screams could be heard throughout the nights. Next morning, with their broken spirits and beaten bodies, they were sent back to Budapest without having seen their husbands.

A few days after we left the place, some partisans arrived from the forests of Slovakia, set fire to the gendarme barracks and shot some 20 gendarmes. Luckily for us we were not there for their revenge.

The Army in comparison was much better to us. By the time we were made to join, most of the army personnel were middle aged remnants of the Great War and while they may not have loved the Jews, had less energy and imagination to torture us in the same fashion as the members of the Jewish labour battalions were tortured and destroyed in Russia in previous years.

In fact, the hardest time we had, whilst being trained in army drill, originated from fellow labour camp inmates, who have served 2, 3 or even 4 years in that capacity and who were charged to make "soldiers" out of us young city slickers. One of them, the young Jewish Österreicher was particularly hard on us. He made us sit on our heels until we fell over, made us run on the spot holding our rucksacks over our heads until our legs and arms were numb, shouted and swore at us and punished us heartlessly.

When in the cow sheds, where we slept, he became human, he told us that the only way we will survive if we become as strong and fit as he was. I believe that after the war, he became a General at the age of 25 and at 28 he was hanged during the show trials of 1949.

Our days consisted of being assembled, counted and drilled. Every now and then we marched about and often we were collectively punished, by having to jump around until fatigued or kneel in the middle of roads. It was quite an acceptable way to spend a day and we were not complaining. The food was quite acceptable, even if we had to wait in queues, but that was where we exchanged with our comrades our daily quota of war news and rumours. When evening came we bedded down in the various sheds or amongst cows in their stalls, where straw was made available for us to lie on and we all in turn did our guard duty and we made sure to be awake when our superiors arrived to check on the guards. One could hear the shout of the sentry challenging and than his report to those

who went around to check on us. It could have been fun if it would have been on a boy scout jamboree, but we suspected that there might be a serious side to it all.

There was very little we contributed to the war effort, but it was early days yet. Soon whole companies were sent to help on farms to dig potatoes or cut timber. Having been instructed by my Father never to volunteer, I did not, when volunteers who could drive were asked for. A relation's future husband (Imre Nagy) put his hand up and was transferred to Budapest, where he spent the rest of the war, sleeping in his own bed every night.

My company was sent to a mine nearby and we replaced some of the miners, who were serving in the army and probably helping out on farms. The farmers were also in the army, but they were sent to act as guards to Jews, who were sent into the mines, etc. etc. No doubt similar inefficiencies were characterising other armies elsewhere, but the Hungarian Army could always be relied upon to be mind boggling.

We spent only a few days in the coal mines and were moved before we could be useful. We were not upset at being moved, although the German saying: "selten kommt was besseres nach" (seldom does something better follow) could not have been truer.

We were sent to the steel mills of Ozd. We marched through the streets and arrived to a school which was to be our home. We were looking forward to collapse on to our beds, which on this occasion, as was usual was to be the bare floor of the class rooms. However, we noticed that some dozens of gendarmes surrounded us and before we knew what is happening, all our possessions were checked. What they were looking for we did not know. They went through everything. The lining of some clothing was torn apart to check better. Cans of food had to be opened and checked. Pockets had to be emptied and the little money we had all disappeared. The belongings of 250 people were mixed up hopelessly by these laughing thugs, who after finding nothing in a shirt or pair of pants threw it on to a huge heap of other clothing, to be sorted out later.

This was the occasion when I "accidentally" showed my photographs of Admiral Horthy. The gendarme asked for an explanation, called in his superior, more arrived to see the photos and I was wondering if I will score my first beating of my Army career. Not at all, on the contrary, one of the Gendarmes started to pack my rucksack, while the other packed my hand luggage, my photos were handed back and a Gendarme helped my rucksack onto my back. Which just shows the mentality of these people and how easy it would have been for somebody in high places to control them instead of allowing them to terrorise us and the population at large.

We dropped on to our floor boards and soon found the least painful position to take up for a reasonable night's rest. It is not easy to sleep comfortably on bare boards, but we soon learned and surprisingly it was quite acceptable.

Next day we were off to become steel workers. Our job was to break up the steel that was poured into channels where it solidified. That steel was still extremely hot and to break it we had to use sledge hammers. To walk on the hot steel we wore wooden clogs covered by steel, but the wood used to catch fire. When that happened, we just had to hobble back to the sides of the area and douse the fire on our feet by whatever water there was.

We wore leather aprons and on our hands pieces of leather, so that we may carry the heavy, hot steel to the outside, where it had to be flung as far as will enable the steel to clear the platform we were standing on and fall into railway trucks below.

There was a way to do the job and the steel workers could have shown it to us. They preferred to have their amusement and taught us nothing. We were burned, dehydrated and endangered our lives. They worked two hour shifts, which was quite inhuman, we kids were given 8 hour straight shifts. They were each supplied 3 bottles of sweetened soda water per shift, we were allowed to drink as much as we liked out of the rubber hoses used to cool the steel. The fact that the water in these hoses was almost as hot as the steel, made our lives just that much more difficult.

It was obvious to every one, even the greatest of Jew-baiters that we could not give our best under these conditions, yet we were accused to sabotage our war and threatened with all types of dire consequences.

Luckily the place where the molten steel was cooling was of limited size and 250 of us could not work there all at the same time. This way, it was not difficult to be excused for health reasons and in any case, after a while, there was a roster in operation, which enabled us to go in on shorter shifts and even have days off. Just the same, injuries and burns were common place.

After about three weeks of this, one early morning we were marched down to the station and after we loaded up the horses, cooking utensils and a whole wagon load of black army bread, we also entrained into cattle trucks. The horses travelled 8 to the truck, 40 of us was to take up similar amount of space. It was July 8th. Our train contained my company and some other companies from our battalion. It was soon after we started to travel that we heard the news that there was an attempt at blowing up Hitler. It took two days for the news to get to us and even then some of us did not believe that it happened, some of us did not believe that he survived. Quite a number of us thought that if he dies things will deteriorate further. Many of us thought that Hitler is a calming influence on the "others" such as the SS, Gestapo, the Nazis.

I traveled in my railway truck in a sort of a haze. On my neck I had a number of carbuncles, some of which needed cutting open. The medical services in our company were provided by two medical students, who between the pair of them had almost 3 years of study, - some years ago. They took a knife, sterilised it by moving it over a flame and started to cut me open. I used a handkerchief for bandage and lay down on the floor of the cattle truck hoping to die or feel better, which ever comes first.

From the direction we were traveling it was obvious that we were going towards Russia. We were interested but fatalistically couldn't care less. What's the use, there was nothing we could do about it.

Back in Budapest some of the parents thought otherwise. They organised themselves into a quasi-committee and made enquiries any which way they could as to their sons whereabouts. Father was still friendly with General Gerloczy and it was he who finally located Company 711/101 on a train traveling towards Russia.

Father started to pull strings, while the locomotive pulling our train got us into Poland. It was definitely Poland as we fell asleep in our train, yet when we wakened we were in Hungary again. Interesting, where are we going from here? Our train next turned

towards Romania, surely not that way? Next the train started to wander towards Budapest, then to the East again, then South. After 5 days the train turned North again and on the evening of our fifth day we stopped at the station of Kecskemét, some 150 kilometres south of Budapest. We arrived.

What we did not realise is that all the resources of the Hungarian Army and the Railways were used to trace the train containing Mr Kálmán's son and to turn it round away from the areas which did not show promise as places where the war can be weathered. The long trip was partly due to un-availability of locomotives, coal etc, but also because a place had to be found where a battalion of forced labourers can justifiably be employed. Once this was found the train was instructed to drop us there.

In Hungary it was still an advantage to know the right people at the right places at the right time.

HOLIDAY CAMP

Indeed, Kecskemét was very much better than Russia. In fact, it was a holiday camp and not only in comparison. We were unbelievably lucky to have arrived there and just as unbelievably lucky to have been able to leave the place in October without a single casualty throughout our stay.

After our arrival we marched to a school in the middle of the country town. There we played soldiers for a day or two and then walked the 8 km to the military airport where our new barracks were being built by a labour company of ex-convicts. They were good enough to work but not good enough to die for their country, so were under the same conditions as we were: i.e. no uniforms, no arms, no pay and always to be accompanied by a guard.

The convict company and ours lived side by side on the outskirts of the airfield and we never once had any trouble or problems with them. In fact they always helped us, shared their sources of food and their art of building latrines with us and on one occasion invited us to their circus performance, during which one of the convicts was buried alive in a coffin six feet underground. When the grave was opened 24 hours later, the buried fellow may have been alive, but certainly he was not present. He must have unburied himself during the night and disappeared, - for ever as far as the Hungarian Army was concerned.

Soon after we arrived to Kecskemét I was called to go to the Company office. Obviously I was in some sort of trouble, or so I thought. However: there was my Father. The surprise of seeing him there could not have been greater. At that time all the Jews from country areas were already "re-settled" (deported to Auschwitz) and even in Budapest no Jew was allowed to be on the streets after curfew. Jews had no right or opportunity to be away from Budapest, which was not only against the law, but would have been dangerous.

Unbeknown to us in Kecskemét, Horthy realised what is happening and decided to do something for the Jews. Whether he was being a humanitarian or wanted to collect bonus points for after the war is of academic interest only. He sent his confidantes around to find out what he should and could do and it was his ADC General Gerloczy who contacted Father, sent a Royal Car with a Crown for a number plate to the Jewish House from where Father was brought to the Royal Palace. There he and the General had some discussions and during the talks, Father was to suggest how the Regent, Admiral Horthy could possibly help.

The scheme discussed was for Horthy to exempt certain Jews and their families from the regulations and make them "Honorary Aryans". Gerloczy listened to this and some other suggestions, excused himself and went to the next room where Horthy was, returned some minutes later, asked a few questions on behalf of Horthy, returned with a message, etc. This is how it went on for quite a while, Horthy was interrogating Father but was so ineffectual and frightened in the country he was almighty in, that he was afraid to see him in person, just in case he is reported to have been meeting and talking with a Jew.

Some days later a courier from the Palace arrived with an envelope in which there were two typed letters exempting Father and Mother from all the regulations restricting the

Jews. Father's certificate bore the serial number of 3 and was signed on behalf of Admiral Nicholas von Horthy, Regent of the Kingdom of Hungary.

Within days, Father got on the train and decided to visit his son in Kecskemét. His visit was a great surprise to me, but did cause no great ripples by my comrades in shovels, because my Company was one of non-Israelite Jews, i.e. racially Jewish, but not of the Jewish religion. As such we wore a white armband with our soldier cap instead of the yellow armband, a great distinction, but no great advantage. We had plenty of people in our company, whose father or mother was 100% non-Jewish, in fact we had a guy with us whose father used to be Secretary of State until he was found out to have been sleeping with his half-Jewish wife. My best mate's father was actually a professional non-commissioned officer and came to visit his son every week.

Father and I sat and gossiped outside the office when the young officer in charge of my company came by. I jumped up to salute him, my Father greeted him with a loud: "Good Afternoon, Lieutenant, Sir!" to which he replied: "What on earth are you doing here, Uncle Kálmán?"

Lieutenant Bocsor was the son of a flour mill owner, who was a customer of Father's and who often visited Father in Budapest with his son. After their chat I realised that things might be looking up for me. Although I did not know what the Lieutenant could do for me, I knew that I have a friend. Luckily for us Bocsor was a friend to us all, even though sometimes he was frightened to show it or wise enough not to.

Bocsor invited Father to be the guest of the Company for meals and he did so, meeting all the important people like Kövári and Kelemen. His fame preceded him because most of these people knew of Father's role in the efforts of ensuring that our train goes to Kecskemét and not to some outrageous place in Russia or Poland.

After a while our wooden barrack sheds, pre-cut in Germany and designed in the same fashion as the concentration camp huts, were erected and we could move out of the school and onto the airfield. There were six side entrances into six rooms of the long building. Each room had a long table and benches in the middle and on both sides shelves, three high. Those shelves were our beds and living areas. Our heads pointed towards the middle so that we could at least breathe. The shelves were about 1 meter high, so that once we were in our "living areas" we could only crawl or sit. Not surprisingly we spent minimal time inside.

In spite of fatigue, sleep did not come easy as the place was really hot and airless, so some of us moved out and slept in the fresh air. However, we awoke with swollen eyes, full of mosquito bites and the dew settled on us. We decided to sleep under the wings of the enormous Gigant planes, that were strategically set up around the airfield. One night while we were asleep one of these planes was towed away and we just missed out on being crushed by it.

Our job was to build a second runway at the airfield while it was being used by both the Hungarian and German Air Force. We had a few Stukas (dive bombers), Messerschmidt ME 110's (fighters) and Focke Wulfs (light bombers) and finally the 6 engined Gigant transport planes. These had noses that could open and the body of the plane could take a tank or 200 people standing up. It was then the largest plane flying and interestingly it was really a glider plane, which used 6 French made engines and a number of small rockets to become airborne. Many were the occasions when we were involved at one end

of the runway in building it and had to run for our lives because a Gigant was lumbering down the runway and we felt that it will never take off. Mostly they did.

The road making machinery being used for laying the runway was made by the same German company, who manufactured Father's Medicago hammer mill in Budapest, Prague and Berlin. They were also well known as manufacturers of narrow gauge rail equipment and these were also to be seen around the airfield. Soon it became known in the building contractor's office that one of the chaps in one of the labour companies can be approached for advice as to the best way to order spare parts for an Ohrenstein & Koppel machine.

We had no trouble with the Germans or the Hungarians on the airfield. Especially the German Luftwaffe personnel was polite and absolutely correct in their behavior towards us. Even the gendarmes left us alone, but then we lived on the airfield and made sure that we had the correct authority when we went into Town to paint it red. We actually enjoyed visiting Kecskemét and on one memorable occasion the staff of the local house of ill repute took a day off, purchased food and wine, engaged horse-drawn carriages and came out to the airfield for a picnic. They were amateurs for the day. In the evening they returned to work.

Our life was almost enjoyable, but it was not all skittles. The food was not too bad, but of course most of it was "ersatz" - substitute. Coffee was made from chicory, bread was black and hard and weeks old, meat was available seldom and obviously we were restricted in our movements. Even if we had permission to leave the airfield we had to be escorted by a soldier, who in turn had to be bribed to do the escorting. Health was also at a premium, because in spite of the best intentions, the living conditions, the close proximity in which we were with our comrades, caused a lot of diarrhoea, infections and both flea and lice infestations. The worst was the prevalence of a form of typhoid, which caused the patient to almost waste away in a few days.

I escaped almost all illnesses, except skin problems, and I claim that this was due to the fact that I never went near the official latrines. If I had to go, I picked up a shovel and wandered off to the fields and dug my own, never-to-be-used again hole. While I had lots of diarrhoea attacks I never contracted the dreaded spotted typhoid and in fact I doubt if I had a single day's ailment during all the months I spent in the army, with the exception of my constant dermatitis and some problems with my teeth.

One day I was called to the office and was told by Lieutenant Bocsor that I am to travel to Budapest and bring back some nails which were used to hold the railway lines to the sleepers. It appears that Father was asked to find these nails, which were required to build the narrow gauge rail line on the airfield and of course he had some in stock and Agocs released it to him. He agreed to supply but for every 10 kg nail bartered a day's furlough for his son. I was to be accompanied by a soldier who was to guard me and also to help me carry the nails. We could only carry 40 kg, so that gave me 4 days with my parents in Budapest.

The interesting thing was, that by that time Father, with his Regent's Exemption, and Mother with hers decided that it would be safer to live in a Hotel than in the Jewish House. However, I could not go there as I was not exempted. Thus they lived in the Hotel Császár and I lived in their room at home.

The flat was chock a block with people. Being locked up almost all day, not being allowed either newspapers or radio, they were starved of news of the outside world and I brought to them some hope by coming back home, being sunburned and in fine shape. I could not tell them any horror stories and I was not even giving them the impression that I am returning to my company with reluctance.

There were literally thousands of people in the 20 flats of the building. One of our new neighbours was a young lady, who like all young people of those days was in a hurry to live her life, in case tomorrow is cancelled. She fell in love with me instantly and never left my side until I left her and Budapest. I was not complaining.

The next time I saw her, less than 12 months later, it was at some sort of celebration or party. By then she was the wife of a Turkish diplomat and to-day I could not even remember her name. I believe that at the same function was the wife of another Turkish official. Her name happened to be Zsazsa Gábor.

Becoming an "important" supplier to the war effort had certain other advantages. Lieutenant Bocsor appointed me to be the custodian of the nails and also I became the storeman in charge of the shovels and other hand tools. My warehouse was at the other side of the airfield amongst all the army and air force officers, both Hungarian and German, and to get there I was provided with transport. Not quite a chauffeur driven car, but a bicycle, a luxury which was very much appreciated as it gave me freedom of movement I enjoyed greatly.

I felt rather bored and lonely on my own so far from everybody, that I considered going back to work to build the runways, but instead I appointed my friend George Kennedy as my assistant. Now there were two of us doing no work. This was noticed by the civilian building supervisor, who insisted on calling himself major and requisitioned for me to become his assistant in addition to my usual job in the warehouse. He spent all of his days sitting at his desk, whittling away at a piece of wood making cigarette holders in the shape of male sex organs. These were all exhibited in his office and had to be dusted every day. This was my job. I also had to make a fire, using the chips of wood from under his desk.

To relieve the boredom I used his telephone. There were not many people I could ring, but I managed to ring my parents in their hotel a few times. The way to do this was to shout at the operator sitting at the airport switch and get her to connect me into the switchboard at Kecskemét. From there I had to be put through to some other Town's switchboard and knowing the code word which gave me a priority I got into the Budapest switchboard, from where all I had to do was to ask for the hotel number. All went well until one day my Father would not recognise my voice on the phone and insisted in telling me that he has no son. I realised that I should cease ringing them and I did. Later I heard from my parents that after one of my phone calls military intelligence rung them to enquire who it was who rung them and why.

We were almost completely isolated from the war. We knew that the Russians were progressing well and were pushing the Germans back, that Tito and his partisans were causing a lot of problems to the Germans and of course we knew that the Allies in France must be winning, because the news services were constantly explaining away the loss of ground in the West as well as in the East.

However, there was very little that suggested to us in our idyllic surroundings that we are in the middle of a vicious war. We sometimes saw in the evening sky the bombing of

Budapest, we saw the flashes as the bombs exploded some 150 kilometres away. The bombers that attacked Budapest were Russian and they always came at night. However, every day a huge armada of American planes arrived above Kecskemét on the way back from Germany.

We were not at war with the USA and it seemed that we had an arrangement with them. They did not bomb Budapest and the Hungarian air force kept away from New York. Sometimes they dropped their bombs they could not get rid of earlier over Germany, but our American friends made absolutely sure that they did not drop it on any target larger than wild pigs. The Hungarians protested about the daily overflights, but this was the extent of the quarrel.

Thus it was no surprise to us that the air raid alarm went off every morning at about 11 without fail and on hearing the siren we all, soldiers, airmen and slave labourers were wandering to the centre of the airfield where there was a large reservoir of water. Being mid-summer we were usually frolicking, some in our trunks, some without.

On one memorable occasion we were swimming in the water, when we saw some Messerschmitts coming in to land. This was at the time when the Rumanians, after being allied to the Germans, with no prior warning signed an armistice with the Russians and declared war on the Germans. The Germans began evacuating their troops from Romania by sending almost all their Gigants to airlift arms and troops and being close to Romania and having a long runway, our airport became the home port for the Gigants, which continued to fly out the Germans as long as it was possible.

We believed the Messerschmitts to be German and we were hardly interested. We saw their wheels come down and expected them to land as so many of them did every day. We became interested only when they started to blaze away with their machine guns and cannons at the parked planes.

Although it should have been obvious that they were not after the 40 or so young men frolicking in a muddy water hole, it seemed to us that every shot was directed at us. The whole lot of us ran as fast as we could out of the water and tried to burrow ourselves into a nearby mound of clay. Never could one describe the sight of so many nude bottoms pointing to the sky and seeing no heads attached to them.

The attack was carried out by Romanian planes. It was repeated next day, when the destruction of every plane on the airfield was completed. It was difficult to hide one's glee at having seen some 50 German planes destroyed.

By early October it became obvious that war is approaching Kecskemét. The Russians were coming and we were discussing if we should hide and get liberated when the Russians occupy the area, or if we should retreat with the Germans.

Some decided to stay, they were the unlucky ones. When the Russians came, they did not get a great reception from them and were not allowed to follow them back to their lines when they withdrew. Staying in no man's land they were betrayed by the Hungarian population and many were summarily shot by the SS.

Most of us, however, decided to retreat as soon as possible and we were watching what the German and Hungarian air force people were doing. In this respect I became a very important link in our intelligence service. I worked in the middle of the air force offices

and actually sat in an office where there were both Germans and Hungarians. I could overhear their telephone conversations, hear them discussing the situation and generally I could gauge what the situation was.

By that time Lieutenant Bocsor was almost completely dedicating himself to ensuring the safety of his 250 slave labourers. He was a great little bloke and the fact that he might have been promised financial rewards if and when it will all be over, does not take anything from the fact that he was a gentleman.

My friend Kennedy was very sick with an infection on his thigh and he left employment as my assistant warehouse man. Instead I got a middle aged fellow to help me do nothing, who was cheeky with the Hungarian soldiers and constantly baited the civilian workers of the Army and Air force installations, who came to us for their hand tools. He told them what he will do to them when the Russians come and made himself a very unpopular man to both his labour comrades and to his enemies.

The closer the Russians came, the more nervous these people became, realising that on our testimony will depend what will be done to them after the Russians arrive. They were particularly disturbed by my idiotic abrasive assistant and 4 or 5 of them decided to do him in. They beat him until he was half dead, then they knifed him and left him for dead. I watched horrified from a distance, could do nothing except to run for one of the officers, who knew him and suggested that he deserves the beating.

He did not die, but I actually had to push his eye back into its socket before I put him on a horse drawn cart and dispatched him into the hospital. He stayed there through the first three day occupation of Kecskemét by the Russians, survived the return of the Germans and I met him after the war, aggressive as ever.

Bocsor relied more and more on two comrades of ours, who were both ex-officers, and who could be said were almost in charge of our company. Kövári and Kelemen, both called George, were as different as chalk and cheese, but single minded about surviving and ensuring that they knew about anything that happened around us. With foresight, they were buying food from the peasants and stockpiling it, while ensuring that the food given to us was nourishing and that we were fit and healthy. They even bought medicine on the black market and were most concerned for us all. There were others high in the pecking order. Another George, Schusztek, (who later married Rózsi Bársony, the Marilyn Monroe of Hungary) and even the Barons Tornyai and Dirsztay, together with Goldpierre, a well known poet and playwright, are members of the top echelon as Bocsor consults them also. I also become important, but only as a listening post. Furthermore I had a bicycle and thus became the most mobile of our company and its official courier.

On the 4th October I reported to Kövári and Kelemen that the German Air force is issuing rifles to the aircrew, whose planes were destroyed. On the 5th I see some German Waffen SS troops digging in just outside the airfield. Next day I tell Bocsor that the German and Hungarian airforce people are burning their files and packing up.

BACK TO BUDAPEST

Bocsor, Kövári and Kelemen went into a meeting to which I was also invited. They decided that we should start our retreat towards Budapest and they instructed me to get our company together. They were working all over the place, some as far as 6 kilometres away. I got on my bike and went to collect them. The job was not without its problems.

In one case 30 fellows were working for the Germans unloading a railway truck full of paint. The German sergeant was completely unmovable about my wishing to take his helpers, he was only interested in unloading his paint. I argued with him and suggested that he talks to his own superiors who are supposed to know all about our orders and who will know that our company must leave Kecskemét whether or not his paint is unloaded. He left to contact his Airport commander and by the time he returns, we were gone.

Finally we were all together outside the barracks. It is late afternoon when Bocsor and Kövári address us. They give us a few pointers as to what we are to say if we are stopped by either the Germans or the Hungarian military police, but their main advice and instruction is that we should try and stay together on our way to Budapest, but if we cannot, we are to meet in the courtyard of a certain building and re-form the company.

Bocsor and a couple of others got into the best carriage and drawn by two of the best horses set out on our unauthorised retreat. Kövári, Kelemen and Schusztek, together with a sergeant sit up on the horse drawn peasant cart. Kennedy, still sick and I start off, pushing my bike, which has our luggage tied on it. The others, except some who stay behind and go into hiding, also start walking and a very bedraggled lot starts out for Budapest.

Some of us have compasses and thus even in darkness we know which direction to go. To ensure that we go by the most direct route and so as to avoid the Germans and gendarmes, we walk through fields, hoping to reach the main road soon.

Instead of the main road we met about 30 SS men. They stop us and instruct us to return to Kecskemét and dig some anti tank ditches. Kövári, who is with us, explains to the SS that we had orders to immediately return to Budapest, where we have very important war duties to carry out. The leader of the SS group listened politely and they moved back a little to have a conference. Finally, they wave to us and leave.

Next night SS men, the same or other than those we met, approach a similar group of retreating labour campers some 50 km away from Kecskemét, ask them to return and when they do not, shoot all 220 people, with only a few getting away to tell the tale.

The later it gets, the more tired we become and the more difficult our march gets. Soon we stopped and started emptying our rucksacks and suitcases. I sat down with Kennedy in the middle of a field and we inspected our luggage with a view to lighten it. After a while I suggested that we are crazy:

"You know damned well, that we are going to lighten our luggage every few kilometres, why the hell don't we just throw the whole lot away now?"

George agrees and we simply get up and carry on with our retreat, carrying nothing. He leans on the bike and I push it. His huge open wound on his thigh hurts him so much that

he cries and I have to be very firm to make sure he carries on. Finally we reached the road that leads from the South to Budapest.

We were surprised to note that we are not the only people taking part in this retreat. There are thousands of civilians and we count 4 different armies, Hungarian, German, Croatian and Russian, yes, Russians who joined the Germans and who have now a lot to fear from the Red Army. They retreat in cars, carriages, horsebacks, bicycles, pushing prams, pulling handcarts or just walking.

Once we get to the road, we should ride the bike, not just push it. Kennedy is almost incapable of walking so I make him mount the bike and he pedals or I just push him for a some time. After a while, we stop and have a little rest and fall asleep in a roadside ditch.

He felt better when we wakened and so I suggest that he takes the bike and tries to get ahead. He does so and I soon loose him. I carry on walking for a while, until I discover Kővári and Kelemen at the road side, giving their horses a rest. They invite me to join them and I do so with great pleasure. Having a horse cart full of food, makes them very desirable people to know.

So we carry on, with horses so tired that none of us sits on the cart, but actually help pushing it. At about 2 a.m. it seems that if we want the horses to get us to Budapest, we better stop. Kővári walks to a peasant house to find that the owner is a "Schwab" or a Hungarian born German.

They were not very sympathetic with Hungarians and positively anti-Jewish. They were less than enthusiastic about letting us in and allowing our horses to stand and spend the rest of the night in their sheds. Kővári takes his highly illegal pistol out of his pocket and does as if he would be wondering whether to shoot them first or burn the house down. At that we are invited in, but the atmosphere is less than cordial. We and the peasant family all sleep in the same room and are up and ready to go two hours later.

Kővári offers to buy some eggs and chickens, but they will not sell. So Kelemen just takes the food from them and we eat their food while getting ready to go. There is another offer to buy some chucks, but they simply don't want to know us. So Kővári takes out his pistol again and starts shooting the chucks. We take at least 8 dead chicken, leaving no cash for the farmer.

We ommit to farewell our reluctant host and join the long line of refugee transport. The traffic is one way only, so much so that both sides of the narrow road are taken up by refugees and retreating soldiers. We are still walking beside and behind the horse drawn cart, our horses were in a worse shape than we are.

Every now and then there are military police stationed to interrogate and instruct the retreating members of the Army. We get our instructions from the MP's and promise to report to HQ as soon as we get there. Of course we have no intention of doing so. We are sure that the war for us will be finished as soon as we get to Budapest. We cannot believe that after such a disorganised retreat the German and Hungarian armies can ever stop running.

Finally we got to the outskirts of Budapest after our little walk of just over two days. We covered some 150 kilometres, which was not too bad, after all we had to help the horses up hill. We say good bye to the horses and to each other and take the tram for the next

stage of our retreat. I take a soldier escort with me to ensure that I don't finish up in the cooler.

Of course my parents were in the hotel and not at home. Not that there is a shortage of people in the flat, which is still occupied by a multitude of people, all hungry for news about the Russian advance and when it might be all over. I am too tired to gossip and I go to sleep with my escort in my parents twin beds and feel really happy to take my boots off for the first time after quite a few days.

In the morning my parents came back from the hotel and were happy to see me in their bed. Jews not being allowed to have telephones Father has to go searching for one to cancel the Royal car, which was arranged to take him for another day of search for his son. What happened was that Father through the Army Command found out that my 701/101 Company disappeared from Kecskemét. He assumed that we are on our way to Budapest, so he wangled a Horch from Horthy's fleet and came to pick me up and give me a lift.

He was probably trying to make up for all the times when he did not allow me to be driven to school. Father and the chauffeur of the Regent's car spent the whole day trying to drive towards the front from where the thousands of refugees, myself and the retreating armies were coming, with limited success. The crowds trying to avoid the Russians would not allow even the Regent's car to pass. We probably missed each other when I boarded the tram. It was a great pity because I would have cherished the memory of having finished my retreat from the War in the luxury of the Regent's car.

Instead, my escort and I went to the meeting place agreed, but only a small fraction of our Company turned up. Those who did not, must have been convinced that the war was over and they had no further use for our Army unit. After making arrangements for our next meeting we returned home.

Next Sunday I went visiting relations. It was a lovely autumn morning and I felt real swell in my brand new leather jacket. I wore my army cap and the white armband and I was pleased because I looked clean and elegant and also because it was the first day of new regulations, allowing us to out on the streets without an escort.

My cousin Bözsi greeted me with the news that an armistice was arranged between the Hungarians and the Russians. She just heard it on her gentile neighbour's radio. I went looking for a radio and heard it myself: Horthy made an announcement and declared that the Germans broke their word, they attacked Hungarian citizens (oblique reference to the Jews, who were delivered by his Government, his railway, etc. to the German extermination camps), they have acted against the best interest of Hungary, they wasted the lives of Hungarian soldiers and what's more they arrested his own son. Consequently he decided to arrange an immediate armistice with the Russians and per medium of this broadcast asked the Russian Army not to fire on Hungarian troops pending the signing of the armistice agreement.

The background to all this was that Horthy's elder son, Stephen, 4 years earlier became the Deputy Regent, or in other words became his father's heir in an obvious effort to establish a dynasty. In 1941, less than a year after becoming the Deputy, 35 year old Stephen Horthy joined the Hungarian Air Force in Russia, where he is carefully kept away from being shot at. One day as he takes off in his German maintained and serviced plane, his Messerschmidt loses part of a wing and crashes above the runway.

The investigation is conducted by the Germans and Hungarians who agree that there are no suspicious circumstances. However nobody doubts that the Germans are responsible.

Horthy has another son, Nicholas, who is completely disinterested in politics, armies or air forces. However on the death of his brother he is forced to take an interest in the affairs of his family, which automatically means that he becomes involved in Hungarian power politics. When an approach is made to the British, it is Nicholas Junior who acts as courier, and when the Yugoslav Partisans of Tito wish to talk with Horthy, he sends his son along to meet them.

These partisan emissaries turned out to be SS officers led by the same Skorzeny who sprung the captive Mussolini from the mountain top where was guarded and who becomes the specialist in dirty tricks. Later in the war it is Skorzeny who leads the Germans who pose as Americans in the Ardennes offensive.

It is on Sunday 15th October 1944 that Skorzeny meets Horthy junior, shoots him in the stomach, rolls him up in a persian carpet and having carried him into a truck, kidnaps him. On hearing this Horthy senior gets really angry and decides, without having made any preparations, to send a recording to be broadcast to the studios of Radio Budapest, denouncing the Germans. Nothing shows the naivety of the rulers of Hungary more, but the fact that no body guards the radio station which is simply occupied by the Germans within the hour of the broadcast, nor is any force required by the Germans to occupy the Government offices or the Royal palace, where the Government and Horthy are patiently waiting for the Germans to arrest them, which they do, without a single shot being fired.

By 11 a.m. the Germans are frantic only because they cannot find the head of the Hungarian Nazis, Ferenc Szálasi who up to that day was being ignored by the Germans. They need Szálasi, because they want him to form a new Government. They find him at 1 p.m. and Hungary has no Government, no Regent, but a new Fuhrer.

ARROW CROSS RULE

Soon the radio blared out invitation for members of the Arrow Cross Party to collect their arms from the Army. The Army was instructed to either lay down their arms or join the Germans or the Arrow Cross. By 3 p.m. it is all over, bar the shooting.

Indeed, the only shooting that occurs is in the Ghetto area. It is there that the newly armed boys of the Arrow Cross movement decide to have a go at some Jews, who must have had some arms hidden, for they shoot back and defend themselves capably. From then on the Arrow Cross murderers will concentrate on unarmed Jews whenever possible.

On hearing about Horthy's radio announcement I immediately made my way home. My parents were there and my uncle Imre arrived by lunch time. He told us, that members of the Arrow Cross were checking people's papers on the streets and arresting some. He himself was stopped, but got away, because he had some false identity papers, which was accepted by them.

Imre was my Mother's younger brother. He was not the brain of our family and when I asked him what papers he carries with him, he showed me that he was very well equipped, because in addition to his false identity papers, he also had every one of his own papers neatly in one of his pockets, while other sets of false identity papers were being kept in other areas of his jacket.

I insisted, that before he leaves our flat he empties all his pockets, which after a lot of reluctance he did. I then checked everything he had and allowed him only one set of his papers, which happened to suggest that he is an Aryan and allowed him a fairly good cover-story, which I rehearsed with him until he knew it. He was very upset with me to have taken his real documents, including his birth certificate and did not realise until later that day, that his was the first life I ever saved.

Uncle Imre left us that afternoon and was stopped by a band of Arrow Crossites within a few minutes. His papers were regarded as suspicious and he was taken to a school which was used as their HQ. There were hundreds of people captive there, being interrogated, tortured, beaten and every now and then groups of people removed from there and taken away to be shot. Imre was not interrogated that day and stayed overnight in one of the class rooms.

Next morning he recognised another captive, a girl called Susan Kádár, who was a niece of my Father. She was cleaning the floors of the school corridor and recognised, but did not greet Imre, realising that if she speaks to him, his life will be jeopardised. Susan was not quite 15 at the time. She was kept alive by the Arrow Cross people as their whore and murdered when she became pregnant.

After a night of frenzied blood letting, Imre was released next day unharmed, travelled to re-join his wife in the country, where they hid and survived.

While we had no radio to receive news of what is happening, we realised from little bits of news that there are very great dangers in living in the houses where the Jews were concentrated. The reason why they were concentrated was of course arranged with a view

of facilitating the easy collection of all Jews for the purpose of trucking them to Auschwitz or other death camps.

Not that we knew what was in store for the many thousands of Jews from the country who were first put into a concentrated ghetto area and then put into cattle trucks, crammed 80 to 120 to a truck, designed to transport 8 horses and sent to their final solution. Those that survived the 5 to 8 day trip without food or water were then either sent to the gas chambers or selected as being suitable for labouring on a temporary basis before conversion into ashes.

As we heard from a survivor of the camps after the war, Eva and her mother survived the selection, while Uncle Bandi, Eva's father was gassed within hours of arriving to Auschwitz. Margit, Eva's Mother, became sick later and was sent to the gas chamber. When after a while Eva contracted diphtheria, she kept it secret as she knew that when found to be sick she will also be gassed. This way she was sick for a while and finally died in her hut, with diphtheria and because there was no medical attention available, - another innocent victim. Her wasted 21 years old body must have been put in front of the hut and collected by other starving, shuffling inmates, commonly known as "Musulmans".

Even 'though we did not know all the details of what is happening in Auschwitz, hearing the guns outside our houses, seeing Arrow Cross gangsters strutting in their caps and armbands with the arrow cross instead of the swastika, with their rifles harassing Jews, we started to remember all the rumours we used to disbelieve. However even we could not imagine the extremes of horror, that we found true afterwards.

All the hate these semi-literate blood-thirsty people could muster was pent up and ready to burst. These people were hoping that the German occupation of their country will deliver the Jews and their imagined riches into their grasp, yet after seven months of German occupation they could still not have what they thought was rightfully theirs. Instead, the jewels of the Jews was taken by Eichman's organisation to Germany and with bombing and the Germans removing food from Hungary their own circumstances were getting worse. What's more, the lot of the Jews started to improve, there were no deportations, Jews were left to live in their Ghettos and Jewish houses, they were not pestered by the authorities, especially in Budapest.

Now that the Arrow Cross party and Szálasi were in power, the time was ripe for the members of the party to harvest their rewards and reap the benefits of their patience in awaiting the day when the German authorities will give full power to their chief and to the other co-operators.

It was obvious that some action will occur. It was time to get out of the house. Father and Mother were resigned to stay in their flat, - it would have been impossible to go to their hotel or to stay there. I stayed with them temporarily, but was waiting to get back into my old Army unit.

I was not the only one who was yearning for the security of Kecskemét and my Army Company. My 701/101 Company's second "reunion" was a greater success than the reunion a week or so ago. Now everybody wanted to get back into a peaceful labour camp. Unfortunately, we had nowhere to go, no one wanted us. Lieutenant Bocsor did his best, trying to interest the Army in giving us something to do, to make us eligible to get food in exchange of our work, but the Army was much too busy in surviving themselves amidst

the new order being established by the Arrow Cross Party, who were now the de facto Government of Hungary and thus the Army was not being very worried about a Company of non-Jewish Jews.

There was nothing to do but to go home again and arranging to meet at the court yard of a building in two days time on the 20th October.

It was at 6 a.m. on that day that we were wakened by the knock on the front door of the flat. Police and Arrow Cross were collecting all men between the ages of 16 and 50. I could prove that I belong to an Army Labour Company and was excused, but Father and hundreds of others were taken from the house. They were taken onto the street and marched off. From other houses too hundreds of people were collected and all over Budapest thousands of Jews were marching towards their next meeting with fate.

That afternoon I rejoined my Company again. We finally had official status and we marched off to the railway station to travel by slow train to an area where the defences of Budapest will be strengthened by digging some ditches, to stop the Russian tanks. It was said that our ditches will stop their tanks for 8 hours and one minute. It will cause them to stop and laugh for 8 hours and the one minute is what is required to cross the ditches.

We were billeted on a farm at Veresegyháza and we moved into the cow shed where we bedded down on the straw now unoccupied by the cows, due their having been requisitioned and eaten by the German Army. The farm was owned by the Palotás family. One of their brothers-in-law was one of our comrades, the Baron Dirsztay and it must have been interesting for him to be the "guest" of the Hungarian Army on the farm where he used to be the honoured guest of his relations in happier times.

I cannot be sure, but I venture to guess that the Baron managed to find a more comfortable bed than the straw in the cow sheds and probably also had his meals with his landowner relations.

A lot of our comrades were missing. On the morning when the Arrow Cross collected all men from Budapest many of those who belonged to our Company were picked up and they could not join us. Most of them were herded to the brickworks at Obuda, from where they were marched either towards Germany or sent towards the front lines, which were than some 50 kilometres towards the east of Budapest.

Father and his comrades from our house were taken to a sports stadium on the outskirts of Budapest and then next day marched some 25 miles to a place called Valkó, where they were put to work to dig anti-tank ditches. They lived in farm buildings or on the fields of these farms. Very little food was provided and they were guarded by the Arrow Cross, who constantly abused them verbally and in some cases physically. They were also relieved of every penny they had and in another camp two Jews were executed because they had a few coppers left on them by accident after they were ordered to hand in all their money.

Of course none of us knew where the others of our family were. Mother was back in Budapest, attempting to find out where Father or I was and at the same time she was trying to get hold of a "passport" for both of us. At this time it was realised by some of the neutral countries that unless some effort is made to save the Jews of Hungary, soon there will be none left to save and thus Switzerland, the Vatican and especially Sweden gave all who could get close enough to their Legations a piece of paper, declaring that the

person named is under the guardianship of the country concerned and all authorities are charged to respect the rights of the country and the person.

All this was started by the Swedish Legation, whose Raoul Wallenberg has personally been responsible to save thousands of Jews. This young Swede has taken it onto himself to rush around Budapest and outside of it, fight and argue with the Germans, who were hell bent to move the Jews into the gas chambers before the ring closes and they might be unable to feed the death factories. He was just as fearless in arguing with the Arrow Cross threatening them with all sorts of consequences if they do not carry out the non-existing international agreements he was telling them about.

Wallenberg was a remarkable man, who within a few days after liberation by the Russians, was invited by them to their HQ, where he was captured and sent to Russia, never to be seen again. Or more accurately, he was seen by various people, although the Russians never admitted to have captured him.

My unit was sent into the fields to dig our quota of ditches. Some Army experts marked out where we should do so and we worked on a beautiful hillside overlooking green fields and pastures. It was hard to believe that there was a war and we were scarring the country side with a view of hindering the Russian Army. Our work done we returned to the farm where, after a nourishing meal of goulash and a hefty piece of black bread with "szalonna", we lay down to sleep in the cow shed.

At the time I developed all sorts of skin problems and managed to have everything infected. Thus while my comrades were busy digging trenches to hold back the Russian hordes, I was flat on my back fighting for my life due to a blood poisoning on my wrist. Our sick bay consisted of that part of the cow shed where usually cows gave birth to their calves and it was there that the officers' cook visited me and asked what I would like to eat. Being delirious I asked for a particular type of carp that had no bones and Tommy Lorand, the chef, delivered it to me within a few hours. It was not the real "mirror-carp" but Tommy removed every bone from the ordinary fish he obtained heaven knows where and I enjoyed that fish more than any other before or since. Tommy continued to look after my diet for the next few days.

I improved sufficiently to work around the farm yards and realised that our horses were dying of starvation. I suggested to Lieutenant Bocsor that may be I could assist and get some hay for the horses. With a soldier as guard and with one of my comrades I set off on a peasant cart towards the Royal Farm, where the manager of the farm was one of the people who attended the chopper demonstration in the presence of Horthy.

I arrived to the office of the Royal Farm at Gödöllő with some trepidation. How is the manager going to take to my approaching him? With the horses, cart and corporal and my comrade left outside I ventured into the office. There were at least 10 people waiting to see the great man. A soldier, his batman, asked me what I wanted and jumping to attention I reported to him, that "I, Kálmán István, member of Company 701/101 would like to see Mr. Vilmos Thiringer."

"Colonel Thiringer, you mean," said the batman, "and what the hell would you want from Colonel Thiringer?" he bellowed.

"A cartful of hay, Sir" said I manfully and watched the soldier laughing at the audacity of this kid of 18.

Nevertheless he reported the matter to Colonel Thiringer, who on hearing my name rushed out of his office, embraced me in front of all the people, kissed me and took me into his office. I was absolutely overcome, - I have seen this man from a distance and in Admiral Horthy's company some 15 months ago, have never spoken to him. All he knew about me was that I was my Father's son, I was persecuted and I required his help and hay.

He gave me all the hay I wanted, offered me money and suggested that I contact him again, although he felt that the Russian advance is progressing at such pace that he will probably need to retreat with his staff. He arranged for us to have as much hay as our vehicle could carry and also arranged for us to be given grain for the horses and meat for us.

Kövári and Kelemen were still running the affairs of the Company and they were concerned with the many who used to belong to our Company, but were taken by the Arrow Cross during the round up on the 20th October. A list was made out of those 20 or 30 that were missing and Lieutenant Bocsor asked me if he should include Father in that list. I asked him what he proposes to do with the list and it turned out that the idea was to distribute it to the various camps run by the Arrow Cross and ask them to return the members of our Company who were inadvertently in those camps.

I am not sure whose idea it was, but instead of distributing the list, it was decided to have a list taken round and to "order" the Arrow Cross Camp Commanders to deliver the Jews who were needed by the Army to the bearer of that list. One of the non-commissioned officers volunteered that he will accompany the mission provided he is paid 100 Pengö, an amount then equivalent to \$22.

I volunteered to go and with the non commissioned officer, Steven Petö (now manufacturer in England) and George Lászlo (he became a gynaecologist) the four of us set off to find and bring back members of our Company and some relations who were taken in the Arrow Cross "razzia" of 20th October.

About forty of us will return four days later.

We had no idea which way to go and where our comrades might be. We started towards Budapest and while walking or accepting lifts on retreating Army trucks we were making enquiries. Whenever we heard of camps run by the Arrow Cross and containing middle aged Jews, we went to the camps and presented our list. By the evening of our first day we collected 2 comrades and they were released by the Arrow Cross without any problems. In fact, it was so easy that in the second camp we visited I met a good school friend of mine, Peter Arányi and invited him to join us. He refused, saying that his father was taken to Germany some time ago and he wants to find him, so he is looking forward to getting to Germany. He did not return.

We travelled right through the night. At one stage we got a lift sitting on the top of a German Tiger tank, being driven by a German soldier peeking through the small window of the tank while we were holding onto guns and cannons outside. We could not resist making some remarks about the retreat of the bloody Germans and we were stumped at hearing the German driver of the tank warning us that he understands Hungarian. From then on our conversation was rather more careful and distinctly un-political.

Sitting on our Tiger tank we were suddenly in the middle of a column of Jews marching towards Budapest. We got off the tank to make our enquiries in case there were some of our people amongst them. They were led by Arrow Cross guards and we found no one we knew amongst them. The Jews were dead tired and could hardly walk. They begged the guards to slow down or to allow them to rest. The young guards, - they were between 15 and 18 years old, encouraged the older men to sit down and have a rest, while the rest of the column marched on.

After a while the guards returned and shot the stragglers. They put the rifle against their heads and pulled the trigger. I know, I saw it. Some 15 people were killed and left lying on the roadside.

Next day we visited some more camps and found Steven Pető's father, uncle and some of our comrades. George László found his brother and he was sprung also. At this point our corporal suggested that he should be paid not 100 Pengő for the trip but 100 per person. We agreed. By the time we finished he earned it all.

With our band grown to a largish group of some 20 or 25 people, it became unwieldy to travel with a group that large and it was decided that while the group stays hidden in a disused shed on the outskirts of Gödöllő, the corporal and myself will go to another camp we heard about and where there might be some more of our people and maybe Father.

We got a lift on a horse cart out of Gödöllő and on the way met the people from the Valkó camp digging their quota of ditches in a forest. There were 11 of our comrades in that camp and my Father also. He was back at the camp excused of work on that day. The corporal and I left, promising my comrades that I will wait for their return from work and take them with me.

The camp of course was not a camp along the lines of Dachau or Auschwitz or Bergen Belsen. It was a series of farm buildings and in some of these the families of farm labourers still lived. The Jews were accommodated in sheds and hay lofts, while the farm carried on its business as best as it could.

When we arrived, we found 3 of the Arrow Cross guards in one of the one room flatlets previously occupied by a peasant farm labourer and his family. With them was a woman in bed and the guards were in a state of undress suggesting that they joined the peasant woman for some entertainment from time to time. This was actually confirmed later by another peasant woman, living in a flatlet next door, who told us that she was constantly used by the guards.

The guards agreed that we can have and take with us any of the Jews who are on our list and I went outside to change the list once again to include all our people and to await the arrival of the working detail. While waiting I found the sick bay and there was our neighbour, Dr. Földes, who told me that Father is well, although he was excused from work that day for a minor ailment. He was not on the main farm but on another one some 5-600 meters away up a steep hill.

While talking to Dr. Földes one of the guards arrived and told the doctor to get all the sick to dress and get all their belongings together because they are going home. He passed on the message and soon the 5 sick came and stood awaiting instructions. After a while the 3 guards came out, lined themselves up opposite the Jews, one of them started to shout at

them and said that they are malingerers and not worth feeding and the three of them started to shoot the sick Jews.

I stood next to them and it took me some time to realise what is going on. By that time the corporal got hold of me and pushed me away from there, to stand in line with the executioners and so I could see some of the people being shot at begging for their lives. To no avail, after at least 20 ill aimed shots, there was quietness. The guards invited my corporal to go and use his pistol to finish off some of them who were still moving, but he refused and the three guards returned into their room for some more ammunition.

When they disappeared, Dr. Földes, who stood on the landing of a loft watching it all from above, shouted at one of the dead: "Now, go now" and one of them, unharmed, jumped up and started to run. He got away before the Armed Cross guards returned to put a few more bullets into the dead, after which they made their way up the hill to take care of the sick Jews in that part of the camp. I rushed to my corporal and implored him to go and save my Father who was one of the sick in that camp. He went, but either did not do anything or couldn't because I heard the shots, some 6 or 7 of them, followed by some more.

The corporal returned first and we went into a room used by the cooks. This is where we were, when the guards sent every one out, except me, to bury the dead. When we realised that the guards went back to have some more drinks, I gave the corporal a photograph of my Father and asked him to go up the hill and identify him. He went and came back to say that the man is lying on his face, but he has very little gray hair. There was no doubt about it, they murdered my Father.

There was very little I could do but to wait for my comrades whom I promised to take back to the Company. I could have left after what has happened, but I never considered it. While waiting, one of the cooks returned from burying the dead and knelt down in front of me and begged me to take him with me. He was the brother of an Olympic gold medallist, and himself a gymnast until he fell and broke his hand, which was now withered and useless. He was petrified that if the guards realise that he is crippled, they will kill him. He offered everything he ever owned, money, gold, everything as long as I will spring him from the camp. I promised to take him and explained to him that he need not pay me, except that eventually he should re-pay the 100 Pengö which I will advance on his behalf to the Corporal.

It needs to be told at this point that some 5 or 6 months after the end of the war I met a young fellow on the street, who was very familiar to me. When he told me what his name was and I saw his withered hand, I knew where I met him, but he could not place me. I helped him, by telling him that we met at Valkó.

He looked enlightened: "Sure, I remember now. We got out of that place just in the nick of time." I agreed with him.

"I wonder what happened to the young fellow who got us out of there," he said, "he wanted me to pay him 100 pengös, but I had more sense than to pay. Did you ever pay him, or didn't you?"

I had to tell him who he is talking to and it gave me a great deal of satisfaction to see him stuttering and wishing that he could disappear. I had to enlighten him, that it was I who paid the 100 Pengö for every one of the people I saved and it was worth every penny.

Another one of the people present in the camp wanted to come also and I told him to call himself József Kálmán instead of Father, whose name was already on the list, but not needed any longer, since I believed my father to be dead at this stage. I asked Dr. Földes if he wanted to come with me, but he was too frightened and he stayed.

The corporal was getting nervous. It was becoming dark and the workers were still not back from their trench digging. We wondered if they weren't in some trouble, being shot or whatever. It was almost 9 at night when they returned and all 11 came to the room. What with no decent lights other than candles, the steam of a watery meal being cooked, the cooks and all the people who were assembling to be taken out of the camp, it was a scene reminiscent of Dante's Inferno and it was not surprising that I did not notice an extra man until he squeezed my hand and asked me if I have heard of Mother lately. It was my Father, very much alive, emotionally drained from waiting all afternoon beside the shot man until he died and then burying him.

Within a short time we formed ourselves into two rows and walked away from the camp. After about an hours walk we met a peasant on a cart and Father and I and the Corporal got on to the cart. Father had to hold both of us in case we fall off the bouncing unsprung cart. I was becoming delirious and running a high temperature once again. I remember dreaming about becoming a Swiss citizen and returning to Champery.

On our way to Gödöllő we met two young Gendarmes who had the man, who escaped his execution that afternoon in chains, taking him back to the camp. The gendarmes did not believe his story of killings and decided to take him back to the camp from where he must have escaped. We explained to them that it is all true. Even they were shocked, took the chains off the man and literally gave him to us. He came with us eventually to Budapest, and after being "executed" once again and his body pushed into the partly iced over Danube, he was finally killed when a Russian truck run over him!

We got to the place where we left Pető, László and the others from the camps and found no trace of them. It was obvious that they were caught. We wasted no time to get away ourselves and we marched towards where our Company was.

We stopped about halfway in a village and went to the courtyard of a pub in the hope that they will be able to feed us. While we were there a member of our own Company arrived with his escort. He was in Budapest and while there he collected some mail for his comrades in 701/101. There was a letter for me from Mother telling me that she heard that Father might be at a place called Valkó and that she got for all of us Swiss consular protection papers, a certified copy of which she enclosed.

I must confess that both Father and I cried. Not only did we find out that Mother was alright, but it was a tremendous feeling for us to know that somebody was still thinking of us and cares. It might sound stupid, but this is how we felt then.

We continued on and the news of our approaching the farm where the Company was billeted preceded us. There were comrades coming down the hill to meet us and help us back to where we started from three days ago. Not having slept more than two or three hours during the three nights we were away, made us almost incapable and while the corporal and I were most concerned about the loss of Pető and László and their group, we could not properly describe what the situation was. Stephen Pető's young brother, who was in our Company was silently crying, knowing that he lost his father and brother at the same time.

My Father was alert enough to go into conference with Bocsor, Kövári, Kelemen and some of the others and they came to the conclusion that we should move back to Budapest as soon as possible. The Company started to pack up and when I awoke from my stupor that afternoon I was told that we are going to Budapest.

Just as we were called to assembly our friends including Pető and László turned up. They were indeed caught, but talked themselves out of trouble, were released and they returned to the shed to await the Corporal and me, not knowing that we were there already and left without them. They assumed that we had some sort of calamity and having waited for us for an extra day, gave us up for lost and made their own way back to the Company.

Once again we travelled overnight, my fourth night on the hoof in a row, and arrived back to Budapest and our home on 5th November 1944. It was my parents' 26th wedding anniversary and never has my Mother received a greater surprise present than the one I brought her on that morning. Here were two of her family returning from their separate places of captivity and returning together. Another one of those miracles, that kept on happening daily and hourly those days.

In spite of our Swiss Protected status, Father and I could not feel safe in the flat. We knew that in spite of that piece of paper, we are not only at the mercy of the Arrow Cross thugs, but also that being men we had to serve or appear to serve somewhere.

The 701/101 Company, on arrival to Budapest, dispersed for the individual members to go home to find or not to find their families. Once again it was arranged that we should meet and some of us made it at the appointed time and place. Some were missing, having been picked up. Those of us who made it to the meeting place were all keen to get back into service once again, finding it safer to "belong". It was not easy. Once again no one wanted us.

Lieutenant Bocsor and Father had some discussions and I was called in to see if I wanted to join Bocsor who was living with Baron Tornyai whose full name was Tornyai-Schwartzenberger. He was a fat bloke, well known throughout the bohemian coffee society of Budapest and he was married to an actress, whose father was the most Hungarian of Hungarian actors: Mr Kálmán Rózsavölgyi, who was married to a Jewish lady, and whose half-Jewish daughter was the Baroness.

The Baron invited Bocsor to stay with them and thus he had a permanent Army officer escort. In any case he lived in the safest flat in the whole of Budapest, because no Arrow Cross member could conceive that the famous Rózsavölgyi was even remotely connected to anything not 101 % Aryan.

Bocsor in turn invited Kövári, Kelemen and after some prompting by Father, me to stay with them in the Baron's flat. We accepted and I left our flat to move in with the Baron and all the other multitude. Father left about the same time, being picked up by one of his old customers, vitéz Baskay Gyula, who was a largish land owner and a Member of the Upper House, a very exalted position.

Baskay was a gentleman of the old school. I did not know him well, because he was regarded as a very important person and as such I was never in a position to talk to him if I saw him in Father's office. When the problems became really bad after the German occupation in March, he contacted Father and offered his help. When he heard of Father having been arrested he came and offered his help to Mother and me.

This was quite surprising, because Baskay was not regarded by Father as anything but a customer, a member of the gentry and just one of the many land owners who were civil to a lowly supplier of agricultural and hardware requisites to the farms owned by the Church and the landed gentry. If Father would have been asked to list his 10 customers who could be termed as friends Baskay would not have been included. Father never entered Baskay's home, he was never taken to Baskay's club and Father would not have dared to invite Baskay either to our house or to his club.

Encouraged by Baskay's oft repeated offer to assist, after our return from Valkó, Father rang him and he immediately offered to hide Father in the house he rented in Budapest, after his own home in the country was occupied by the advancing Russians and he became a refugee himself. It was to a house full of his own family and a number of orphaned children, who were cared for in that house, that Baskay now took Father.

One has to realise the risks involved to appreciate what it meant for people like Baskay to act in this manner and what it would have meant for him and his family if his humanitarian action would have been discovered. The risks we took to survive were natural and had nothing to do with either bravery or decency, we had nothing to loose only to gain our life. Those people who took Jews in were interfering in a private matter between God, the Nazis and the Jews, a matter that did not concern them and could get them only trouble and suffering and almost certainly death. Many a times since, I wondered how I would have reacted to being given the choice of minding my own business or acting to be the saviour of some down-trodden person, against whom all the facilities of the State were mobilised. Would I have risked my life and that of my family for a Gipsy or a Kampuchean or a Jew?

As it is, I did risk my life. I lived with the Baron and Co for less than 2 days when I realised that the Baron was less than pleased that I moved in with them. Bocsor asked me if I would go and there was nothing for it but to get out. But where? Kővári thought that he will be able to get me some false identity papers and indeed he equipped me to become "Kálmán István" but this time a member of the regular Army and a Christian one at that. Bocsor went and bought me a soldier's uniform jacket and I exchanged my mountaineering boots for black riding boots. Kelemen had a black pair of officers' riding pants with red stripes from the days when he was an officer in the Reserve, and thus I got together my Army uniform. The fact that it was early winter and I needed an overcoat as well did not worry me, my leather jacket was not only warm, but very army officer like and very swish.

Seeing that I had all my papers and my uniform to match, Kővári and Kelemen asked me to go for another trip and save some other people from camps similar to the ones I visited in search of Father some ten days ago. Being 18 and not having had anywhere else to go, I agreed. I was given to understand that by the time I return with the chaps from the camp, they will have found a safe place for me to go to.

From where, I do not know, but an Opel Blitz army truck was obtained and together with another soldier, who was the driver, we were off towards the West to find some camps and bring back to Budapest some people, whose name I had on the various lists forged by Bocsor and Kővári.

We found the camps and we found the people, which required a lot of luck as the camps were then already on the move towards Austria and Germany. We got some 20 odd people out of two "camps" the localities of which were a field where the people on the

march were resting and a school yard respectively. Soon we had them packed in the back of the lorry. We had no difficulty and it was all much too easy to be true. In fact on the afternoon of our second day out we were ready to return to Budapest with our charges, when we were stopped by a few soldiers or Arrow Cross in the semi darkness of the late afternoon.

One of those who stopped us asked for our papers and our driver showed the list to the guards, who ordered him to get out from the driving seat and show the Jews he is transporting. He obeyed and got into the rear of the truck. At the same time, I moved across from the passenger seat into the driver's seat so that I could rev the engine, which was giving us a lot of trouble by not idling properly, probably due to the poor quality fuel.

At this time out of nowhere two officers, with Arrow Cross armbands, brandishing revolvers turned up about 10 meters in front of the truck. In spite of the fact that I could hardly drive and certainly did not know how to drive a lorry, I panicked, selected a gear and took off. One of the officers jumped and escaped, the other one was knocked down by the truck and I felt the bumps as the wheels went over him.

I could not hear the shots which were directed towards us as we went along, but my driver and some of the people who were in the rear have watched as the guards opened fire on us. They did not hit us, either because they were bad shots or because not being able to drive properly the truck was lurching at top speed from side to side.

I drove madly for at least 5 kilometres, before I managed to land the truck in a ditch. It was only then that I took stock and found that my driver was, luckily for him, on the truck and that none of the shots hurt anybody. They also confirmed seeing the body of the officer, who was probably killed by me, but we had no sympathy for him.

The truck was pushed and driven out of the ditch in a matter of minutes and we were on our way to Budapest, this time with the driver at the wheel. As we approached the City, some of us thought it to be good sense to abandon the truck, just in case they were looking for us. The suggestion was not supported by the driver who was hoping to make more trips in the future, but finally we got onto a tram, where the driver and I guarded our charges and escorted them to the courtyard of what we hoped will be a safe house. By that time I was well aware of the fact that the soldier was not very friendly with me for being instrumental in his losing his beloved truck and I left him and the others as soon as possible.

I went off to the flat of the Baron and his crowd, to find that Kővári and Kelemen were also told to go during my absence. Bocsor was still there and it was him who told me the address of a timber yard not too far from there, where Kővári, Kelemen and some dozens of others moved to live. It was getting late, but almost as if I wanted to test my new found identity and to show off my uniform, I decided to join them, so I took off.

Sure enough, on the way I was stopped by an Army patrol, who accepted my papers, wished me good night and I completed my trip to the timber yard, where I was to spend the next week or two.

SLEEPING AROUND

The Timber Yard

At the timber yard Kővári and Kelemen greeted me in Army uniforms. It seemed that during my short trip they established a brand new army unit, which was a figment of their imagination. They assumed ranks of Lieutenants. It was a great arrangement because in a day or two we were brave and cheeky enough to re-claim our horses and cart from wherever they were being looked after and drive to an Army HQ and ask food for a Company of 250 soldiers.

There was nothing we could do in the timber yard except to await liberation by the Russians. We had a cobbler living there also and we all gave him a hand in exchange for lessons in making slippers. Other than that we were completely bored.

After a while some of us decided to strike a blow for liberty and petrol bombs were made for the purpose of flinging them into German trucks. I am afraid I did no bomb throwing and thus I cannot claim to have been the cause of the defeat of the German Army.

It must be realised that acting to be a Hungarian soldier made it almost impossible for me to get close to houses which were designated to be Jewish and therefore it was not easy for me to visit either Mother or my other relations. The risk was much too great for no practical purpose.

Just the same, we all went out of the timber yard and in to the City to check on our families. I used to go to visit Mother until we decided that she is to move into a house designated to be a "Swiss House" i.e. one in which people who were supposed to have been protected by the Swiss were concentrated. She found a bed in one of these houses and I promised to help her move in.

When I went to collect her to take her she was already on the street, in the company of all the people who remained in the house. There were hundreds of old, women and children lined up in columns of 6, holding their few belongings in briefcases and bundles, guarded by armed and jackbooted Arrow Cross youth. There was nothing I could do but walk past her hoping that she will ignore me. She did, and I followed them from a distance to see where they are being taken.

It turned out that they were not going far, the Arrow Cross having established their second Ghetto not far from the house we used to live in. The streets were boarded up and small gates were available for people to move in and out, provided they have the correct papers. It was impossible to get through any other way. Within this area, referred to as the Protected or International Ghetto, there were houses set aside for the Swiss protected, the Swede protected, those protected by the Vatican, etc. There were even some neutral South American banana republics whose honorary consuls issued "passports".

It all started with Raoul Wallenberg, a Councillor at the Svedish Consulate, who came to Budapest for the express purpose of saving as many persecuted Jews as he could. His idea was then copied by others. In some cases the governments of the countries issuing the protection papers did not even know that their consuls have done so. In fact some "consuls" set themselves up as consuls and had no real connection with the country they

were representing. Not surprisingly the value of being "protected" was diminishing in direct proportion to the proliferation of the various papers. The only really worth while protection was afforded by Raoul Wallenberg personally, who rushed to the rescue of his Swedish protected "citizens" and who has daily saved the lives of those whom he provided with papers.

He risked his own life arguing and fighting the German SS and especially the Arrow Cross gangs, the latter being especially trigger happy and completely irresponsible. It must be added that Wallenberg would issue passports to all and sundry, in the embassy or on the run to anyone who required protection. He was a real hero, - he fought without weapons, without even a belief in God or religion, simply because he was human. He paid for it all, losing his freedom and his life. He must never be forgotten.

Father was quite far away from the City on the Buda side of Budapest. In the house where he lived, Baskay found a small space under a staircase, without window or a door and it was there that Father lived for some weeks. Baskay looked after him totally, even emptying the chamber pot for him and helping him out for his nightly walk in the garden.

The public telephones in the City still worked and I used to ring Baskay enquiring about Father and sending him messages about Mother and myself until one day when speaking to him, Baskay told me that I must come and collect Uncle Joseph soon, because he has to leave now that some German officers were billeted in the same house.

I had to move Mother from her Swiss House also. There were rumours that the Germans will not respect the protection arrangement and we heard that the Arrow Cross have constantly taken people from protected houses to the banks of the Danube and shot them into the river. If they did not die by having been shot they froze to death in the river which was full of ice floes, soon to freeze over completely.

My biggest problem was therefore to find safe places for both Mother and Father and quick. In my search I went to visit some acquaintances or relations of my Mother's stepbrother's wife's mother and sister, who have taken half a flat under a false identity and lived as if they were Aryans. However, just when I was visiting them two policemen arrived and wanted to take the women, saying that they were denounced as being Jews. I started arguing and after a while they believed me when I explained to them that if they would be Jewish they certainly would not have me visiting them. That I could convince these policemen demonstrates the intelligence of these servants of the State.

The two ladies were frightened out of their wits and they begged me not to leave and thus I stayed overnight. Their fright was twofold, first they got a shock when I arrived, due to my attire, which by then consisted not only of the riding boots, black trousers with red stripe, army jacket and leather coat, but also a special army cap showing that I was a member of the field gendarmes, with a metal head and cross bone insignia as worn by the SS. I also became a corporal, since my latest false papers were better suited to a corporal than to a private. On my belt I wore an automatic pistol, which I purchased on the black market from a soldier.

I left them in the morning and went back to the timber yard. The cobbler was the only one left, all the others were gone. In the middle of the night the timber yard was surrounded and everybody was arrested, or so I was told. In actual fact, Kővári and Kelemen got away with two or three of the others, who were sleeping in the office of the timber yard and not in the shed. They jumped out through a side window and ran.

I felt rather lonely. My parents required my help I could not give them and I had nowhere to go, nobody to turn to. I dropped my bundle, - I was convinced that for us it was the end of the road.

SLEEPING AROUND

Going to Bed.

I decided to go to a cinema and afterwards, to boost my moral I had my boots cleaned by an old man outside the National Theatre. For want of something to talk about I asked him where he lived and he told me that he lives not far from there and is a "bed-goer". The only way to describe what a "bed-goer" is to say, that those people who were quite low down the scale and could not afford to rent a room or even share one, rented just a bed and thus were termed "bed-goers" i.e. they went to the place only to go to bed. There were bed-goers renting the bed during the night, while others rented the same bed during the day.

I asked the shoe cleaner if there were any vacancies where he rented a bed and he told me that he doubts it, but I should enquire. He asked me why I would want to bed-go, and I explained to him that my army pass only gives me a few days and of course I cannot afford anything better.

Off I went to the address he gave me and having told Mrs Szabó that I was on furlough from the front, the little fat old lady accepted me as suitable for one of her ten beds which were let by both day and night. Indeed, while we were talking in the kitchen I could see the room where the beds were and some of them were occupied. In total there were 12 beds, because both her and her son slept with the paying guests.

I paid her a deposit for my next nights' lodgings and went back to the timber yard to collect my belongings, then to another cinema, after which it was reasonable for me to arrive back at Mrs Szabó's place and bed down. I met some of my bed mates, the butcher from Transylvania being the most remarkable amongst them. There was also a young refugee couple, who paid for two beds but used one only and constantly. The street cleaner of shoes greeted me as a long lost friend, which gave me a status amongst these people. I can also remember a young apprentice who has lived with Mrs. Szabó for 4 years.

Another interesting person was one of those who rented a bed for day time sleeping and who told us one morning that she is a prostitute during the nights and therefore has to sleep during the day. The butcher was quite interested in a professional liaison with the young lady, and made an offer which was refused, with the excuse that if her pimp hears about her taking on clients during the day, she will be in trouble. The butcher thereupon offered her meat instead of money, but surprisingly this was also refused. I recognised the woman for what she really was: a Jewess whose cover story was the bit about being a pro. Heaven knows what her cover story was in another place where she must have spent her nights sleeping.

This was a period when everybody legitimate was prepared to tell their history, their adventures, their background and the butcher was no exception. So I heard where he came from originally, how he and his wife escaped from their Town in Transylvania, how they travelled until they got separated and how he got into Budapest. He told me how he went to the Refugee Registration Centre and how they sent him to the police station to

register first and how he then had to return to the theatre where the Refugee Registration Office was set up.

I asked him all the questions I could, so that I became familiar with the sort of questions I may be asked and next morning I set out to get a set of absolutely genuine original false papers for my Mother.

My very first step was visiting a men's wear shop to purchase a walking stick, because for that day onwards I was to be a wounded soldier during the day, but unwounded when arriving as a bed-goer at Mrs. Szabó's place. In the course of the next 10 days or so, I had to hide my walking stick or throw it away and thus had to purchase several sets, always from the same shop. The shop assistant couldn't understand why I am buying all the walking sticks and finally asked me. In reply I told him that I work in a field hospital and I am buying this for my comrades.

My first trip with my stick was to a police station where I registered my Mother, as a refugee from the only Transylvanian town she ever visited, Nagyvárad. On my way to the station, I picked a house, memorised the number and street and this was to be where my Mother was supposed to live. I was more embarrassed than surprised when the policeman noticed the address and asked me whether my Mother rents a room from Mrs X or Mrs Y and of course I did not know if it is a trick question or what.

"Has she blond hair or black?" asked the man.

"I think it is blond," said I.

"Well, it is Mrs. Y than and you better tell your Mother to lock everything away, because she pinches everything that is not nailed down."

I got Mother's police registration and got the hell out of that police station as fast as I could.

Next stop was the Liszt Concert Theatre where long queues of refugees were waiting to be registered as refugees. Unless you had a full set of regular papers, without obtaining refugee status one could get no ration cards and what was more important, if you were registered as a refugee you could claim that you lost your documents and thus the need to have identity papers and papers to prove one's racial purity was alleviated. In fact there could have been no more complete documentation available to any Jew who went underground than a set of Refugee Identification papers.

To jump the queue I became the "Wounded Soldier" and due to my acting ability I was ushered past the crowds up the steps. My Mother's assumed name, Ilona Kálmán was showing little imagination on my part and it is typical that almost everybody who took false papers used his or her own name. There must be a psychological explanation for this.

The clerks interviewing the refugees were sitting at their trestle tables arranged according to the alphabet and thus I was interviewed by the man looking after names commencing with the letter "K". He soon gave me the almost priceless piece of paper proving that Mrs Kálmán is a refugee from Transylvania and my next aim was to hobble down the many steps of the Theatre and get past the real refugees, who were spending their days in badly

organised queues for papers, rations, financial help, clothing and accommodation and therefore less than kind to people who jumped queues.

After the nervous strain of getting past the police, the refugee authorities and the refugees, getting the ration cards from the Food Office was easy. My next problem was where Mother could stay with her newly won refugee status and how to get her out and away from the Swiss House.

I cannot now remember, how it came about that I met Zsuzska Reszeli. She must have been somebody's maid or cleaning woman, and somebody must have suggested to me that I speak to her. I remember sitting with Mrs Reszeli and her daughter Csöpi and discussing my Mother who was a refugee from Transylvania. I knew that this was not true and so did they, we were going through an elaborate ritual of trying not to endanger their life.

Csöpi was 18 and she was a "little person". Her height was that of a 3 year old, her head may have been large for her body, she was not a true "Lilliputian" whose every feature was a scaled down version. Thus Csöpi was not very attractive to look at, but as soon as she opened her mouth and started to talk her gentle nature, her uneducated intelligence and her interest in everything around her, gave her an aura which made everybody to like her on sight.

They did not ask too many questions and there was no interest in discussing money matters. It was obvious that my Mother will pay for her keep and it was clear that if my Mother needed a home they will gladly provide it in their two roomed flat in the centre of Budapest.

I could not send any messages to Mother and had to get in the "International" Ghetto compound to bring her out. I went to reconnoitre and found guards at every entrance. I was devoid of ideas on how to get in there and even less ideas on how I could get out should I succeed in getting in. I left without attempting anything stupid.

Late afternoon and in the semi-darkness of late autumn I got back to see if I could get into the Ghetto. The situation was not different and there were guards to be seen at every street corner, where obstructions were acting as gates. I noticed one area where a "gate" was not manned. I was through that gate like a shot and once inside the Ghetto I started to run. I heard shouting but I was not likely to stop and argue with an armed Nazi guard.

I did not know which house Mother was in and had to take pot luck of running into the house most likely to be the correct one. The gate of the multi story building was open and beyond it a milling crowd who were surprised and terrified to see a soldier rushing in and running up the steps. I enquired what number that house was and found that I was in the right house. I rang the bell at the door of a flat and it was opened by one of Hungary's best known comedians, Dénes Oszkár, then married to George Schuszték's future wife, Bársony Rózsi, who was even more famous than her husband. He did not know Mother, but was not going to give me more information than was absolutely necessary, after all he also must have thought that I am a Nazi myself. He certainly looked scarred stiff. In the background I had a glimpse of the actress hiding around the corner of the entrance hall. (Years later, meeting her in Vienna she remembered, how I scared her.)

I continued my search and finally found Mother in an overcrowded flat on one of the upper floors. I undressed in a hurry and got myself into a bed on the floor, hiding my

clothing under the mattress. It was from there that I watched the Arrow Cross guards who came in soon after, looking for the soldier who was observed to run into the house.

The guards left and Mother and I were without many ideas of what to do next. Finally, I realised that in spite of the terror of being frightened into total inactivity something has to be done whatever the risks, so I dressed, got Mother to put her bundle on her shoulder and quite openly and with considerable noise I escorted her out of the house and towards a gate different from the one I sneaked through.

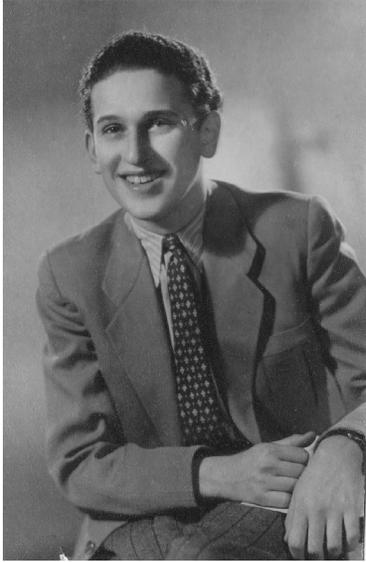
I was asked where I was going and I said that I am taking the old bitch to headquarters for interrogation. Mother sniffled as if she would be petrified, which of course she was. We were allowed to go and we went our way. After a walk of 20 -25 minutes we arrived at the house where on the third floor the Reszeli's lived. It was very late at night, but they let us in and made us welcome.

I stayed with Mother overnight and it was on this occasion that I almost kicked her out of the window. My riding boots were quite tight for me and it was almost impossible for me take them off on my own. There is an old established way of pulling off boots and part of the exercise is for the person pulling the boot to hold the boot between the knees while being pushed away with the other foot. Mother's hands slipped as I was pushing her behind and she went flying with her head towards the low window. I dived after her and we collapsed in a heap, laughing until our laugh turned into crying.

In the mean time I was searching for a place for Father who had to move from the Baskay's place. Once again I cannot remember who suggested it, but I was given the name and address of a Jewish lady, who has taken refuge with one of her girl friends. I went to see them, but they already had someone else, a Jewess who spent years in prison as an active Communist, to come and live with them. However, the Gentile lady suggested that she might make some enquiries from her next door neighbour who ran an unregistered brothel in the flat next door. After a few minutes she came back and I was introduced to Frau Eidam, an Austrian lady of about 62 years, tall, well dressed and speaking atrocious Hungarian. In a few minutes she accepted my Father as a lodger and showed me the empty maid's room where Father was to live.

The next problem was Father's cover story. I decided that the refugee lurk might be the easiest to arrange. So I went through the performance again, first a visit to the police, then back to the Refugee Registration, where I faced the problem of being recognised of having been there earlier. I was lucky, I had no problems, in spite of the fact that for Father's papers I had to go to the same desk as before. Nevertheless, when obtaining his Food Ration Cards I visited a different Food Office to the one which issued Mother's coupons.

I contacted Baskay and we arranged to meet near the Royal Palace. Father and Baskay were already there when I arrived and were quite nervous. The area was full of German soldiers, SS and Army officers with Arrow Cross armbands. I was nervous also, but cheeky enough to greet every German with a very correct Heil Hitler. Baskay was impressed, but Father was not and the German soldiers probably thought that I am a bloody Nazi, but returned my greetings with a simple salute.



I am convinced that if sometimes I would have been less cheeky I would have been less successful. But recalling those days and my behaviour it was not cheekiness or courage but stupidity and enormous luck, which allowed me to survive. I cannot claim not to look Jewish and although I think that my curly black hair seemed to have become less curly during the time of my escapades, it is almost a miracle that no one got wiser to my subterfuge.

Let's face it: I do look Jewish. It could have easily cost me my life.

SLEEPING AROUND

The Brothel

I took Father to the brothel (actually it was more of an assignation service, but she usually had one girl in the flat ready for work) and introduced him to Frau Eidam, who probably knew exactly why somebody like him wishes to take up residence in the maid's room off the kitchen in a flat of ill repute. However, she displayed the same professional discretion as would be expected if he would have visited a brothel instead of taking up residence there and she never asked any questions then or any other time. I left them and went back to see how Mother is going and then back to my bed-going bed at Mrs Szabó.

The Transylvanian butcher was still going out into the country by tram in the morning, buying a pig, butchering it and bringing it back in a huge bag and selling it off the kitchen table of Mrs. Szabó. I usually bought some meat for my "comrades on the front" but delivered them to either Mother or Father. The butcher and I were good friends, so much so that he invited me to become his partner and travel with him to buy and butcher pigs. I declined.

My official cover was that I was serving in a Company in the front line just east of Budapest and I was supposed to be always on my way either to the front or as a courier back to my officers at an Army headquarters near to Mrs Szabó's place.

However sometimes my story was that I was injured and while I could show my blood poison scar on my wrist, which was well healed in spite of my trying to keep it as a wound by frequent scratching, my limp was easier to demonstrate as an injury, but would have carried no weight if subjected to medical scrutiny.

It would not have been healthy to be detained and investigated, especially not if the Arrow Cross or the Army was to have caught you. The penalty for desertion was immediate hanging and there were people whose body could be seen, hanging from lamp posts in the City, sporting blackboards or pieces of paper declaring "I was a deserter" or "This is what deserters deserve". Of course this did not make you less of a deserter but it made you more desperate and more careful.

Nevertheless it was impossible to move on the street and not be stopped by some organisation, who wanted to know your right of being on the street. I was stopped almost daily and it was a nerve racking experience to be checked for your papers.

On one occasion it was obvious to me that those who looked at my papers had their suspicion, because they made me stand in an area guarded by one of them and they kept my papers. Understandably I was anxious and after a while decided that I cannot loose by becoming aggressive. I had my stick on me and started to shout at the men, punctuating my remarks by waving and knocking my stick against the ground:

"It is ridiculous to get one miserable day's leave and wasting it here, waiting for an officer!"

"Is that the treatment we wounded soldiers deserve?"

I made so much noise that they had another look at my papers, handed them over to me and let me go.

It is interesting to recall that a new relationship developed between me and my parents and especially Father. Whereas he used to be completely in charge, he now allowed all decisions to be made by me and although he had an opinion on what he or I should do, he never forced his opinion, in case it turns out to be the wrong one and he needs to blame himself for a tragedy. Generally, he agreed with all what was done and decided by me, who did not possess the wisdom or caution of trying to stay responsible. Indeed, if I would have acted with less bravado and more sense, if decisions would have been taken by me with more caution and without what in retrospect seem enormous risks, I would have had to be completely inactive. Undoubtedly, my parents' chances of survival would have been worse.

Now that I had my parents settled it was time for me to have a few of my own problems. Mrs Szabó warned me one night that two gendarmes who were refugees themselves and were living next flat made enquiries about me while I was out. I did not sleep very well that night and in the morning nice and early I dressed and quietly left the flat.

The building was a typical European housing settlement type, built around 1900. There were 4 floors and they were built around a courtyard. Each of the small flats had their entrance from the landings which were, as if they would have been balconies, arranged around the courtyard. If all the people living in the flats would have stood in front of their doors on the landings, any person in the courtyard could have addressed all the inhabitants.

This time I was hoping to leave quietly through the staircase which was also open to anybody to see from almost any part of the landing. As I got down to the first floor level I heard shouting and saw a gendarme in uniform standing on top ordering me to stop. I doubted the wisdom of running across the courtyard, because they had rifles and I had no ways of taking cover. However, my choices were limited.

I run out on to the road, where the tramlines were in the centre and saw a tram approaching from the right. As it got close I jumped up the moving tram's foot plate. The driver shouted at me to get off and when I did not, brought the tram to a stop. I finally jumped off. Just then another tram was approaching from the opposite direction. This time I jumped on to it from the centre and in the rear so that the driver shouldn't see me. Hanging on to the hand rail this tram bore me towards the house from where I just rushed and as we travelled past it I could see the two gendarmes just stopping a car and going off in hot pursuit of the tram from which I was expelled. Had I not been told to get off the first tram they would have caught up with me.



I went to Mother and told her that I need to find somewhere else to live. She suggested that perhaps I could stay a night with her and I agreed. Next day, I was approached by Csöpi, who quietly told me that they overheard me telling my Mother about my

problems and if I want to stay there, I should feel free to do so.

(The photo shows Csöpi and I in 2006 when my wife and 2 of my grandchildren visited her in hospital where she spent the last 5 years of her wonderful life.)

One has to realise that neither Csöpi nor her mother had any sort of inkling that we might reward them after the war, it was just never discussed. They accepted that we had more than they had and that we contributed to our upkeep by buying food and sharing it with them or giving them money so that they may buy something, if available, which they would share with us. Neither were they religious nor did they have any political affiliations or feelings towards communists or Nazis. They were just human beings, uneducated but bright, poor but happy, who realised that we were in need of their help and found it absolutely natural for them to give that help in the purest fashion.

After being there for a day or so it became obvious to Zanyu, as Mrs. Reszeli was called, that I left behind all my belongings at Mrs. Szabó and she volunteered to go and get it. I had misgivings about this because amongst my few items of clothing there were false papers which were awaiting to be filled in with names, etc. I imagined that if the gendarmes found those papers they will await me when I pick it up or else they will follow the person who picks up my luggage for me. I warned her of the danger she risks.

Zanyu did not listen to me, she said that I have nothing to fear and went off to collect my bundle. Causing us to worry for her safety, she did not come back for many hours, but when she did, she told us that the delay was due to her spending a lot of time traveling from one place to another and making sure that nobody is following her.

She also brought Mrs. Szabó's regards to me and her warning to me that I should not return. The gendarmes called on her again and told her to let them know if I should come back. She promised to do so.

Every now and then I visited Father, who has now arranged with Frau Eidam the payment of 1 gold coin per day, always provided she does not allow any of her girls to work there. I never found out if Father did not want the temptation of the girls, or if he was disturbed by the visitors who rang the door bell at all hours of the day and night. Frau Eidam kept her word only during the night, but she could not refuse to admit any girls visiting her, and if someone called while a girl was there, well she couldn't really refuse the extra money. It would not have been fair to either the girl or the men.

I must say that I never saw any, except one of Frau Eidam's girls until after the Russians came, although we heard them visiting Frau Eidam, bringing her food, or just coming for a gossip. She always shared with us whatever they brought. There was another tenant, the Romanian, who was also sharing the food with us and we could have been one happy family, but we were not. It was not their fault.

Frau Eidam was a non-stop teller of her past experiences. When she was a young prostitute in Vienna she was obviously a multi faceted specialist because her exploits were certainly out of the ordinary. She was telling her stories to us proudly, making sure that we realised that she excelled in her profession.

Her auto-biography would make better reading than my story.

One day while going to Mother, I accidentally met Kövári. He was in uniform and lived in a similar fashion to me. Kelemen was in the Ghetto, together with Kövári's girlfriend and

her Mother. When he heard that I got refugee papers for my parents he asked me to get some for him, his girlfriend and Kelemen also. I promised to do so and after we parted, remembered that both their names started with "K".

By the time I realised this, I was sorry that I promised to have a go at getting the papers as I was becoming nervous about returning there again and especially to the same desk. Still, I promised and in any case, Kővári got me my papers and I have to try for the sake of reciprocating.

In spite of my forebodings I got the papers without any problems. The official in charge of refugees whose name starts with a "K" was not the same I met on the previous two occasions. I made Kővári into my cousin and a married man, his girl friend became his wife. Kelemen was another cousin and when the fellow behind the desk asked why they have different names I tell him that they and I are all of German origin, but we changed our names to sound Hungarian. No trouble at the police stations either, I went to two of them, nowhere near to each other. There were so many refugees by now that getting the papers was surprisingly easy.

Next day I met Kővári, who was delighted to get the papers. It was the last time I ever saw him. Somehow he managed to get Kelemen out of the Ghetto, but had difficulty in arranging his fiancé's escape. Finally, he and Kelemen decided to go into the Ghetto and bring her out. On the way in they are stopped and taken to an Arrow Cross House where they were tortured until they admitted that they were Jews and that their papers were obtained illegally. They are taken down the street and in front of the Hotel Royal both of them get a bullet in the back of their neck, in full view of passers by in one of the main boulevards of Budapest.

Kővári died instantly, but Kelemen was picked up by strangers and was still alive. The bullet entered the back of his neck, through his mouth, shattered his teeth, damaged his throat and chin, but he was still alive. He was taken to a hospital, where he stayed until liberated. I met him after the war, when he was happy but still a mess. He warned me that Kővári's fiancé blames me for his death. Neither Kelemen nor I could understand why. Next time I met him, after a number of operations he was almost perfectly well.

Another sad case is that of a school mate of mine. I met him one day on my way to Mother and I told him what my cover story is. I also told him that I am running out of my supply of false papers and he suggests that I meet him later that evening in a coffeehouse situated at "Freedom Square". For some reason I could not get there, but passed through Freedom Square next morning. As I approach the large square, I realise that something is going on and when I see soldiers with Arrow Cross armbands directing people from all approaches to the square towards the centre I realise that there are people hanging from trees.

One of them was my school friend, the others were the boys I was supposed to meet. After the war I meet his mother, who tells me that she hasn't heard from him for months, but that she has heard from others that he is in Germany. Of course I was too much of a coward to tell her that I saw her dead son months ago.

I also had more pleasant meetings with people I knew. One day I was on a crowded tram when two armed Arrow Cross men and a girl in Arrow Cross uniform (green shirt, everything else black) boarded the tram. I recognised the girl and she smiled at me, but said nothing. Buci Kovarcz was the daughter of one of the most infamous Nazis, who

became a Minister and eventually was tried and executed for the murder of thousands of Jews.

I knew her from my holiday at Lake Balaton, when she and I were going out a few times. After a while I broke off the relationship as it was against the law for a Jew to have sexual relations with a Gentile woman, and even 'though there was no question of anything but a few kisses and a bit of groping around, I did not even wish to be subjected to the suspicion of it. Now on the tram she held in her hand my possible death, had she told about me to her fellow Nazis. She did not and in fact she moved in such a way that her companions had to have their back towards me.

After the war I read in a newspaper that she was in prison awaiting trial. I am afraid I did not try and help her. Happily for my conscience I read soon afterwards that both her and her mother were released and their trial was abandoned.

The other person I met was a guy who went to the same class as I did. He was a junior officer in the army but wore an Arrow Cross armband. He stopped me on the street and interrogated me on why I am wearing army uniform when I am a Jew, etc. I asked him if he is going to report me or cause my arrest. He was quite hurt: how could he betray a friend of his? I must say that I never regarded him as a friend but on that day under the circumstances I was very happy to be a friend of his.

When later he was attacked in school, where we returned after it was all over, I spoke up for him and he came to no harm. Similarly I spoke up for one of our teachers, who I knew helped a class mate of mine, who disappeared later and could not speak for him.

I did not speak up for another teacher of mine, who used to come to our home to teach me and who arrived the day after the house where we lived was evacuated by the Jews. He took over our flat and when the house was almost destroyed, removed everything of value, including even my father's dinner suit, he could find. To his bad luck we survived and we were tactless enough to ask that our belongings should be returned.

I had to move around a lot. I lived with Father in the brothel for 3 or 4 days and then moved to Mother for a similar period of time. They were living about 6 kilometres apart, Father on the outskirts and Mother in the centre of Budapest. To go from one to the other I would have had to go through one of the two Ghettos, and since that was neither possible nor desirable the distance I had to walk from one to the other became considerably more than 6 kilometres.

The war was going on every where but in Hungary, or so it seemed. In October the Russians were 80 kilometres from Budapest, in November and December there was no change, they were just as far as ever. How long are we likely to last without any action around us? The Germans took all the Jews from the country, then the Arrow Cross took all the men from Budapest and the old men and the women and children are now being starved to death in the Ghettos. If that is not enough they are going into the houses and dragging out people for torture and to shoot them into the Danube. There is no food to be bought any more, not even for the Gentiles, even they live on the food they stockpiled, - how long can the Jews last without anything?

Even if Wallenberg could get all the food he needs to distribute it is impossible for him to do so. There were some 100,000 Jews to feed, an impossible task. Thus it is natural for the

dead to be placed in front of the houses to be collected and buried in the parks outside the Ghetto. There is nothing green in Ghettos.

For us it is not that bad, as yet. Mrs. Eidam still finds the odd thing and shares it with us. Csöpi and Zanyu also get a few things and while we cannot say that we eat enough, we are surviving and will cope with it all until after liberation.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR**

Frau Eidam had another lodger, who claimed to be a Romanian. He spoke perfect Hungarian, which was not suspicious as a lot of Hungarians lived under Romanian rule. However it was interesting to us that a member of the Romanian Legation should live in a brothel. That was surprising even at that time at that place. If that was not enough for us to have our suspicions, he was said to be engaged to a member of the Hungarian Gentry, a young lady who lodged in the Hotel Bristol, one of the best hotels in Budapest, yet he accepted with gusto the invitation Frau Eidam gave him and us to attend dinner on Christmas Eve. Not that we discussed our suspicions with anybody.

Father and I certainly did not have any other engagements for Holy Night and we sat down in Frau Eidam's bedroom for dinner. No sooner did we start when the fireworks started also. It appeared as if suddenly hundreds of guns commenced the bombardment of Budapest, which was an understatement. There were over 1000 cannons and Stalin Organs lined up and additionally over 5000 mortars to pound Budapest into submission.

We did not know what a Stalin Organ was, but got to know and respect them: they were a series of truck mounted rockets, each truck letting off 16 or so of these rockets in a matter of a few seconds, after which they were re-loaded and fired again. When hundreds of these rockets were flying above us and landing, you had no doubt that the Russians meant business.

Father and I hardly dared to look at each other in case we burst out laughing or otherwise showing our pleasure in hearing that the fight for Budapest finally commenced. There was never any doubt as to its outcome and we never allowed ourselves the luxury of having any doubt as to whether we shall be around to see victory. In spite of seeing the starving, the murdered, the executed, - all that was happening to people who had bad luck, not us. We were feeling absolutely invincible and I can say that I never had any doubts that I will not perish. However, I was always hopeful that if I do have to go I will have a chance to take one or more of our enemies along with me.

Thus the tremendous amount of cannon, rocket and mortar fire which was to be heard was going to hurt only the Germans and the Arrow Cross, never Father, Mother or me. It made us not frightened, but happy to hear it and to know that deliverance cannot be far away.

Halfway through dinner we had a visitor. It was one of Frau Eidam's girls. Around 18 years old, she was about my age and she brought a couple of bottles of wine for Mrs. Eidam and sat with us while we finished dinner. Afterwards the Romanian and us decided to take down one set of the double glazed windows, so that if a bomb hits us, only one set of the glass should be broken. When we tried to put on the light again, we realised that the electricity supply failed.

We sat there in romantic candle light and with every sip of my wine, I was getting more and more convinced that Father's frequent advice that I should have nothing to do with prostitutes was all wrong. When our visitor decided to go home again she said good bye

and asked me to step out into the corridor with her. I wondered and maybe even hoped, that she will now solicit her services. She did nothing of the sort, just said:

"If anything happens and you need a safe place, you and your father can come to me" and gave me her address on a piece of paper. She left before I could even deny that we needed a safe place. I wish I could say that I met her after the war, but I didn't.

We went to our beds or in my case: mattress, quite happy, knowing that it cannot last long now. In actual fact it lasted another 3 weeks, not a long time as such, but an eternity, when you are being shot at and hunted from every direction.

It has taken a few days before we realised, that on Christmas Eve, the Russians completely encircled Budapest and having done so, bypassed it and mounted an offensive towards Vienna. Within Budapest there were still strong German troops, who in accordance with the stupid no-retreat order of Hitler, were left behind and who had no hope other than to become POW's if not killed in the siege. Later there was an attempt by the Germans to break out, but it was repulsed by the Russians and the Germans lost tens of thousands of soldiers for no result.

I stayed with Father for a few days after Christmas and it was extremely cold. There was nothing to heat with and I used to go down to the street to scavenge some timber to burn in our tiny stove in the maid's room. Whenever we lit the fire, Frau Eidam came in to amuse us with her stories of the dirty old men of Vienna and her magnificence in giving them what they paid her for.

Frau Eidam did not know that I used to pinch the insides of her German penny dreadfuls, of which she had hundreds in various book cases and burn them, leaving the covers of the books propped up with matchsticks. It was a nasty trick, but it kept us all, including her, much warmer than anything else I could lay my hands on.

Our Romanian friend stayed in his room some nights, but was visiting his fiancé in the Hotel Bristol some other nights. Luckily for us, he was at home when we had some visitors the day before New Year's Eve.

We were already in bed when the door bell went. It was late night and there was a lull in the cannon fire. We were anxiously listening who the visitor might be. We soon heard the voices of the three Arrow Cross troopers as they announced in the entrance hall of the flat that they came to check the inhabitants of the flat.

One of them said:

"We are searching for Jews and deserters. Give them up or you'll be shot too."

Our Romanian friend came out of his room and we heard them interrogating him, but he satisfied them. They came in to the kitchen. We heard the clutter of their machine pistols knocking against the kitchen furniture. If they turn left they are in the bathroom, if they turn right, they come into the room where Father is in bed and I occupy a mattress on the floor.

By that time I was on my feet, grabbed my trousers and put them on. Within seconds even my tight boots slide on without any effort. I was in bed wearing my shirt and pullover, so all I need is my pistol. I take it out of its holster, check the safety lever, cock it and stand behind the door, firm in my resolve to let them have it as soon as the door opens.

Father is much too shocked to be able to get out of bed. He whispers that I should jump out through the window, then he suggests that we should give ourselves up. I try to shut him up and I succeed temporarily.

I hear the Arrow Cross men talking just outside the door, there is only a thin veneer between them and me. The Romanian is telling them jokes and they laugh, he invites them to have a drink in his room and they accept. There is quietness again, except Father starts to ask me and himself what will happen to Mother, using the exact same words he will use 36 years later on his deathbed. I open the window lock in case we really have to jump for it and put on my jacket and leather coat. I cannot get Father to move, he is lying in bed, stroking his head, probably praying, paralysed from fear.

Suddenly we hear rifle fire outside on the street. The Arrow Cross trio in the Romanian's room hears it too and they rush out. We hear them on the street, where they find that the shooting was in connection with some Jews who were trying to escape. The Jews were shot at and surrendered. Next day we hear that they were marched down to the Danube and shot into the water.

Here but for an unnamed Romanian and an Austrian brothel keeper would have gone I.

As things quieten down, Frau Eidam comes in to tell us that the Arrow Cross left. We cannot let on that they saved our lives, after all we Kálmáns are perfectly legitimate. But I think that they knew. What they did not know was, that they have done anything extraordinary. I believe that they thought it just as natural for them not to bring the Arrow Cross into our room as it was natural for us that the Arrow Cross wanted to find us so that they can kill us. It appears to me that you can get used to everything, even to being killed.

On the morning of the 31st December I leave Father to go to Mother for a few days. On my way I sneak into the International Ghetto and the house where my Grandmother is, with her daughter, Irma, son-in-law Paul who is Father's erstwhile partner, granddaughter Bözsi and great-granddaughter Zsuzsi. I bear gifts: a quarter bottle of brandy, some biscuits and half a loaf of bread and more importantly the news that we are still around and that it cannot last too much longer. I wish them a happy New Year for 1945. I had little risk - it could hardly be an unhappier year than 1944 was.

I will see my relations again in 16 days time.

The Russians were pulverising Budapest. The cannons go non stop all day, except they stop at exactly 11 a.m. and at 3 p.m. the times when their planes take over and instead of being shot at we are bombed. Mother, together with the rest of the legitimate population of Budapest lives in the air raid shelter. Father goes to the shelter once only for a few minutes, but decides to join me and never goes to the cellar ever again. I never once go into an air raid shelter throughout the siege of Budapest or before or after, except once to let Mother know I am going somewhere.

Having seen how the other half lives, I don't have a yearning to sit in the cellar and although one feels rather exposed on the third or even on the first floor of a building when the bombs and rockets start flying, I realise that there is very little difference in being hit in a cellar or on the roof. Consequently I never feel unsafe even when I believe that I am the sole target of all those tonnes of bombs that are being thrown at us.

I arrive to the Reszeli flat and Mother is very happy to hear of Father and the László family. She wants me to come down to the cellar, as also does Csöpi and her Mother. I will not go and I move in to their third floor flat. To quieten their fears I make my bed under their heavy kitchen table which I move under an archway between kitchen and hall.

In the late afternoon the aerial bombing stops and we are in for possibly the most concentrated bombardment of WWII. One corner of the flat gets a direct hit and the wisdom of my sleeping under the table is shown, when another direct hit causes the kitchen cupboard to tipple over and onto the area where I would have had the bed.

After the first direct hit on the flat, Csöpi arrives to inspect the damage and insists on staying. She gets the cards out and we play pontoon until midnight, when our mothers arrive from the cellar and we celebrate the arrival of a new and hopefully, happier year, after which I get them to take Csöpi back to the shelter and I finally get into bed. It is then that the flat is hit again, but once again I am completely uninjured, although slightly deaf for a while.

Next morning German troops arrive and set up camp in the court yard of the house. They have a field kitchen there and from then onwards, Csöpi either gets or steals food from the Germans. They are friendly, frightened and far from home. One cannot but feel sorry for them. Not much, just a little bit, - after all we regard every German soldier, rightly or wrongly, as a supporter of Hitler, a gangster and an enemy.

Csöpi spends a lot of time with me. We compose poems, write a diary and make up New Year's cards to give Father, Mother, her Mother etc. There is a man in her Mother's life, but it isn't Csöpi's father, she happens to be illegitimate, as if being a midget wouldn't be enough of a handicap.

There is no doubt that Csöpi has a crush on me. It is not surprising. I would have been the first boy of her age, who bothered to talk with her, I would have been the only one she could steal for, cook for and help. Is it any wonder that she regards me as a friend and probably imagines that I would be more than that if she would not be size of a three year old child.

(I am eternally grateful to her and her Mum and my Mother supported them until she herself died in England with me taking over assisting her until she also died in 2012. However through me she was decorated and celebrated by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation in 2007 and finally in 2010 she and her late Mother were declared Righteous of Nations by Yad Vashem and given the Order of Bravery by the Hungarian Government at a glittering

reception with Ministers and Diplomats taking part when 17 Righteous were being celebrated. I spoke on behalf of the Rescued and some friends and relations and my wife present.)

After spending a few dangerous days with Mother, or more accurately, near Mother I return to Father and Frau Eidam. Nothing changed there either. From now on, I spend 3 or 4 days at one place and a similar period at the other place.

Father always wanted me to become a "Weltreisender" i.e. somebody who travels around the World, - now at least I travel from one safe house to another in a Budapest which is falling apart.

THE SIEGE

The siege and bombardment of Budapest was at last something which we all shared in. The Jews were not singled out for special treatment, although we certainly had the handicap of being eligible to die by both Nazi and communist bullets. The search of the Arrow Cross thugs for Jews to plunder, torture and kill, was going on unabated even when the Russians were within hours of entering the City.

The Arrow Cross Party was so extreme that it has been kept underground by Horthy and was ignored by the German Nazis also, until Horthy asked for an armistice on 15th October 1944. The Germans then called in Szálasi and his madmen and they were armed for the express purpose of arranging the final solution of those Jews who could not be transported to Auschwitz and the other death factories.

There was a "legitimate" Arrow Cross Government with Szálasi, a former major, ex-convict, the new Fuehrer of Hungary.

His Government consisted of all types of psychopaths some of who personally tortured and killed people and children, beat children for no reason other than that they were Jews and who spent their days in Government in ensuring that they can get hold of as much material goods as could be stolen from Jews, who were tortured in Party Houses to disclose where their fortunes are hidden.

The Minister of Interior was Kovarcz, the father of the girl I courted at Lake Balaton and he gave official consent and encouragement to murder. The Foreign Minister was 23 year old Baron Kemény, whose first action was to declare war on the USA, thereby prolonging the war by at least one hour, while the Americans found out where the hell Hungary was.

The Arrow Cross Houses were buildings occupied by the Party within a day of their take over and they were used to house Party members and their families. The cellars were used to hold Jews until they could be beaten to confess and give up their hidden belongings and then taken to be killed. Each of the Arrow Cross Houses had favourite places for the extermination of Jews. The location was dependent on where the killings could be carried out with the least inconvenience.

The Arrow Cross House closest to the brothel used the banks of the Danube to shoot the Jews. If properly positioned, the Jew would fall into the river and the body float away, together with the ice floes that were gathering. Eventually the Danube froze over completely and when spring weather caused the river it gave up hundreds of bodies. The amazing thing was that there were a number of people who, having been shot into the frozen river, swam away, climbed out and survived. The man, who was executed at Valkó in November, was shot again in January, swam downstream and even survived the freezing weather. There were many more, including women and children, who injured and half frozen, survived. There were others, who having survived, were seen alive in the water by their murderers and were given no chance the second time.

It might be difficult, but one ought to be able to understand that people can be anti-Semitic. Not everybody is perfect and while it is undemocratic, there can be people who do not like the Chinese or prefer their daughter not to marry a Negro. One should be able to understand prejudices in respect of colour, race or religion and while such prejudices cannot be excused they are an accepted part of life and cannot be abolished. But how does one rationalise the anti-Semite who wishes to kill a human being just because he is

Jewish? Even the Ku-Klux-Klan used alleged crimes by a Negro as an excuse for lynching that particular one.

Behaviour like that of the Germans, who were systematically and with factory like efficiency slaughtered the Jews in exterminations camps, had their origins in anti Semitism, but the organisers of the gas chambers, the doctors who conducted the experiments and made the selections must have been maddened by the brain washing they received or were devoid of any humanity. One cannot say that they were "animals" because no animal kills its own species unless for food.

We were discriminated against and we were looking forward to meeting the "Russki". We were not communists, but that did not enter into our thinking at all. Even if we would have had a feeling about the politics of the Russians or if we would have known about Stalin's Gulags, we would have still regarded the Russians as our saviours. There is nothing we would not have done to put our arms around our friends and liberators, knowing that they bring us life and liberation from being subjugated and treated worse than any other nation or race ever was.

At the same time, we had to be liberated soon, we could not last much longer. There was no food, and we were wondering if paper will give any nourishment. In a few days time, we shall be reduced to cooking paper, or shoe leather or socks. It is surprising that when you are hungry, there is no other thought than food and your hunger is just a large piece of pain in a body that consists of a large empty stomach.

It was on a food scrounging expedition that Father went towards the eastern areas of Budapest on the 14th January and returned with some little food he was able to find. However, he also told me about seeing some strange people from a distance with strange fur caps. They were obviously Russians, but neither he, nor I recognised them as such. We probably just ignored it, because subconsciously it was too good to be true.

LIBERATION

(15th January 1945)

Father and I spent a restless night in our tiny room. We were used to the sound of the cannons and Stalin organs bombarding us, but more and more small arm fire was heard. This could mean only that the front line was approaching us. The weather was freezing cold and we felt it more than ever in our state of constant hunger. It was a relief, when dawn came and we could get up and start to move about in the flat.

As soon as we woke up on the morning of 15th January, we were interested to see some activity on the streets through the windows. German soldiers and officers rushed around on motorcycles, stopped then moved off again. It was some time since we last saw German soldiers and seeing them suggested that something is happening on that miserably cold morning.

At about 7 a.m., I was brushing my teeth in Mrs Eidam's bathroom, when I saw a number of people in a group on the street. Father came to shave himself and he pointed out to me that one of the people in the group wore a similar cap to the one he saw the previous day. I became interested and after a while realised, that there were two men in strange fur caps, wearing strange quilted jackets and having machine pistols with strange circular magazines slung on the backs. The other people around them were Hungarians, talking to them in sign language.

There was no doubt about it, they were Russian soldiers. We are alive, we made it. It's all over. Or is it? Remember the Russians who advanced past Kecskemét, only to retreat and hand it back to the Germans, with tragic results for the liberated Jews?

I wish I could say that we started to jump from joy or that we sung a hymn or that we rushed down to kiss our liberators. We probably were too exhausted to be jubilant and too blasé to become anything other than cautious in accepting that there might be a change in our circumstances. In fact, we were so doubtful, that the occupation of our area was permanent, that we told no one in the flat of our sighting Russian soldiers 15 meters away from our window.

However, soon we had a knock on our door and it was our Jewish-Communist-Russian speaking neighbour, wearing a red dress and red scarf, who came to tell us that she was one of the people in the group speaking with the Russians, who are here in force.

We started to believe, when our two Russians started to walk away from the group and proceeded to saunter towards Russia, - towards the East. However, before we had time to start worrying, that the Russians are retreating, we realised that our building was surrounded by lots of Russian soldiers.

Our building was on the corner of two streets and we could overlook both streets from different rooms of the flat. The bathroom gave us a good view of the street leading to the north, where we first saw the Russians and also towards the east. Our room gave us a good view of both east and west (where we could see the Danube, at the end of a street), always provided that we leant out of the window.

Frau Eidam's room was at the other side of the house, from which one could see all four streets, having a bay window facing the corner. From that window you could see towards the west, right down that street that led to the Danube, while we could see towards the south if we stood at the far end of the bay window and squinted towards the left. That was the direction the City was, that was the place where the Germans set up their barricade.

That barricade with its machine guns and cannons was strangely quiet. We decided to investigate and went to Frau Eidam's room to peep. Yes, the barricade was still there, but deserted. I decided to stick my head out of the window and have a closer look. As I did so, the barricade came alive. A burst of machine gun fire directed towards my head made me decide that I should pull my head in, while I still have it.

Of course the Germans weren't shooting at me. This became obvious when in the middle of the cross roads in front of us, we saw the dead bodies of four Russians, who minutes earlier walked around just as freely as did the two Russians, who were surrounded by the people.

There were lots of Russians in the street with the West to North axis. They were quite safe, being sheltered by the buildings. However, without any orders or fuss, the soldiers moved to both corners of the two buildings that gave them cover and laid down a small arms barrage of fire, that enabled some of the other Russians to rush to the middle of the exposed street and drag their dead comrades back.

They then carried the bodies a little while, put them down and became disinterested in the war. Instead they found bicycles and had great fun riding them and having races in the safety of the buildings between them and the Germans behind the barricades. One lot of Russians even found a Volkswagen and drove it forward and backwards, stopping just short of reaching the cross road where the Germans could have had a shot at the car and the drivers, who had too much fun to die.

Suddenly, a mobile field gun arrived, being pulled by a large number of Russian soldiers, two of whom were women. This we have never seen before, we watched them leaning out through our room's window, when out of nowhere, a number of Hungarian soldiers arrived, with their arms held above their heads. They must have been bailed up in a neighbouring house, in a flat or in a cellar and decided to surrender.

We were interested in the reception they got: to start with nobody took the slightest bit of interest in them and after a while they lowered their arms. The Russians were setting up their field gun, taking off the tarpaulin, pushing it to the corner of our building, then pulling it back and all this time the Hungarian soldiers were in their way. Finally, the reluctant captors got fed up with the Hungarians and pushed them until they understood and went across the street, away from the Russians, who just wanted to get on with their preparations for continuing the war.

Obviously the Russians were waiting for something, probably ammunition, because they were bored with their cannon and with the war in general. Almost from boredom, they went across the street, where the Hungarians were sitting and started to look at their boots and if they found something better than their own, they exchanged them. Also they had a look at the wrist watches of the Hungarians and took those away. There was absolutely no hostility shown by the Russians, if anything there was a form of camaraderie which so surprised the Hungarian soldiers, who were given to understand by the German

and Hungarian propaganda, that if they surrender they will be shot, that they wanted to kiss and hug their captors.

It suddenly dawned on me, that I was still in my Army uniform and it was time that I became a civilian. I took off my army jacket and put on a suit I had for just such an occasion. The trousers of the suit were used to cover my officers riding boots. Later they were tried on by a Russian, but he found it impossible to put them on and I wore them for many months as my only piece of footwear.

I took my army uniform up to the roof of the building and left it beside a chimney. At the same time I had to get rid of my automatic pistol too. I decided to throw it down a ventilating shaft. Before I did so, I decided to fire it at least once, before I throw it away. I carefully cocked it, held it towards the sky and pulled the trigger. Click, it misfired. I checked it out, pulled the trigger again with the same result. I changed the magazines, fired again but to no avail. Obviously my pistol was a dud one. It was just as well that the Arrow Cross did not come into our room, when I was waiting for them with my pistol, I would have died and not just from embarrassment.

Finally, the Russians must have received their supplies and decided to get on with the war. They shooed the Hungarian soldiers off, without any guards towards the rear, positioned their cannon so that the body of it was in one street, but it was pointing towards the barricade. Father and I were most interested and we were rushing around from one room to the other to see what is going on. In Frau Eidam's room we had the better view of the barricade which we were hoping to see pulverised soon and we could also see the preparations being made to let off the gun.

There was a big picture window in that room right above the field gun and it occurred to me that when the gun is fired, the window might break. I told Father and tried to get him away from the window as I felt that they will fire it any second. We both retired to the far end of the room, and we were waiting for the sound of the gun, but there was nothing happening. Father decided to investigate and stepped back to the window.

I saw the window lift out of its frame, floating up towards the ceiling and then come down, seemingly in one piece, landing and breaking into little pieces on Father's bold head. Then only did the deafening sound of the cannon register. I rushed to Father, who was standing at the empty window, stunned from the noise and from shock. I expected him to keel over and be cut in to slivers or at least have his jugular cut. On the contrary, there was not a solitary sign of blood or bruise. Another one of those miracles, but this one has a perfectly good explanation: contrary to what I believed I saw, the glass has already disintegrated by the time it came down on his head.

The barricade had a lot more damage. After the first shot of the cannon, there was nothing more emanating from the German side, but to make sure the Russians let off a few more, before withdrawing the cannon from its position, covering it with tarpaulin and calling it a day.

It was an exiting day and the night was promising to be just as eventful. As soon as it became known to the Russians that part of the cellar was used as a warehouse for a wine wholesaler, they broke it open and started to drink. Before long they were going from flat to flat searching for women and raping them wherever they were found. Young or old, as long as they were women, were thrown to the ground, held by one and raped by the other one or two or dozens.

The screams of the raped was going on half the night until the women decided that no one, including their husbands, is going to help them or else the Russians became sated. At the time, the victims did not have our sympathies. We felt that it is a welcome change for the others to be on the receiving end and the Russian soldiers probably felt that a bit of raping is what is their right, after what has happened in Poland and Russia.

Jewish women were also taken, but they never complained, - they must have been ashamed of their liberators or maybe they felt that this is the least they can do for the people who liberated them.

Next morning we woke up early. We decided to make some enquiries to see if all is clear for us to walk across half of Budapest to the centre, where Mother was. We did not need to make any enquiries, our Romanian friend arrived back from the Hotel Bristol with sad news. His fiancé was killed in the shelter of the hotel, she was incinerated with all her belongings. Only her jewellery was left because he was carrying it for her. The whole hotel burned down, he survived only because he was not in the shelter, when a direct hit of the shelter occurred. The Russians are in full control of the whole city, all German troops having been either killed or they surrendered.

Hearing this Father and I took off immediately. On our way we called in at my Aunt Irma and Paul's cellar. They, including my Grandmother survived. We told them that they are liberated, warned them to hide the girls from the Russians and continued our rush towards the City, where we were hoping to find Mother alive.

There was no need to hurry. We could only go another 150 meters before a kind old bearded Russian did not allow us to go any further. He was trying to tell us about the nemetski, i.e. the Germans, who he pointed out were only across the street. He obviously did not know that the Russians were in control of the whole City. We left him and went ahead, until we came to the Comic Theatre where we had to cross the wide boulevard of St. Stephen.

There was so much firing going on, that we started to look for snipers, but all we could see was a German armoured car shooting at our side. For an army that was non existent, they made a lot of noise. We decided that our Romanian friend was either less than truthful or else he was misinformed and we returned towards our lodgings at Frau Eidam. As we started to run towards the rear, we saw our kind old muzhik, - half his head was missing, he must have been the target of an armour piercing cannon or something.

Getting back to Frau Eidam's flat, we were keen to tell our Romanian friend that he was wrong, but he was not there. While we were away he collected some if not all of his belongings and with his fiancé's jewellery simply disappeared from our life. We often wondered who he really was. There was something mysterious about him: always well dressed, clean, charming, yet he must have been a fraud, like we were. Father actually made inquiries about him, wanting to thank him for saving our life, but neither the Rumanians, nor the Hotel Bristol has ever heard of him. The hotel he told us has burned down was in good shape until demolished 25 years later. We were doubtful as to the shape and condition of his fiancé, if indeed there as one.

Next day, we were off again on the same errand. Our dead Russian friend was still lying unburied on the street and where we were warned by him a day earlier not to cross, on this day we were stopped by Russians who made us work for them, by carrying out telephones from a telephone warehouse and loading them into a truck. Beginning that day

and for the next 3 months whatever was not nailed down, was loaded into Russian trucks and trains and transported to Russia.

Only a very small proportion of what they took could have been ever used. For instance the un-boxed telephone handsets were piled up in a corner of the truck and over these we loaded first some cable and then some sort of powder in sacks. Whatever it was it was inedible. We certainly tested it.

When we were finished we were allowed to go on and we wanted to pass in front of the house we used to live in and where our belongings, or what was not pinched, still were. We couldn't, instead of the street there was rubble about two stories high. The school opposite our house had 10 or more tonnes of explosives in its cellar, which went off with sufficient force to destroy not only the school but also the houses opposite it. One of these houses had our flat on its fourth floor while another of these houses had a street level office which Father had in partnership with an engineer, who was building concrete silos.

We had no desire to waste time and so we bypassed the rubble towards Kálmán Street, where we had just a glance at Father's office and warehouse, which seemed to be almost completely unmarked.

During our trip across town the cannons were just as busy as ever. Father and I played our usual game of identifying each bang with a "This was an outshot" or "This sounded like an inshot" meaning that we were the shooters or that we were the targets. It depended on being a pessimist or an optimist as to what you thought happened.

There was another game we could play: depending on what we thought was the direction from where the shot was coming from, you walked on the side nearest to the assumed source of the shot, believing that side to be the safest. Thus it came about that as we approached a building of which one sixth was owned by Father, we couldn't agree as to which side we should walk on and Father walked on the side of the building which he part owned and I walked on the opposite side.

Suddenly a cannon or rocket landed above Father and heavy chunks of stone fell followed by some snow, missing him by what seemed a few inches only. He couldn't have moved faster to join me on my side and we stood there for a few seconds gazing at the huge gaping hole.

"Damn it," Father said, "my one sixth of that building was just shot away." His statement and sense of humour in those circumstances deserves immortality.

It was snowing heavily and visibility was not very good, but even from that distance we could see that there are a number of people outside the building Mother lived. It seemed that they were congregating outside the gate as if to welcome some Russians. We hurried along, wondering if Mother is alright and if she is amongst the people outside on the street.

Just then a cannon shot landed amongst the people. We could see it lifting the people and dropping them as if they would have been rag dolls. Some of the people seemed to be unhurt and they dragged the injured towards the gate, but left some on the snow believing them to be dead.

We started to run and as we got there saw the blood stained snow, but the bodies left behind were all male. We rushed into the yard, where there was a milling crowd of about

60 people trying to tend to the injured. We asked around: "Where is Csöpi?", "Do you know Csöpi?" believing that Csöpi is the one everybody would know. The second or third person we asked, was a black faced dirty old woman, who recognised us even if we did not recognise Mother.

We kissed and hugged and laughed and cried. Three out of three alive. Is John alive to make it the perfect score?

Mother's black face was due to the fact that she was one of those outside the gate and she was so close to the explosion that her face was blackened by the explosion. We went upstairs into the Reszeli's flat and Father met Zanyu and Csöpi for the first time. We stayed for a while upstairs, but the Germans were bombarding Pest from Buda, which they were still holding. We soon went downstairs into the safety of the courtyard and it was then that Mother saw her first Russian soldier.

Mother just about attacked that Russian, hugging and kissing him on the face and his hands. The poor man didn't know what hit him and he was trying to escape Mother's administrations, while Father and I were trying to hold her back, because of the rape situation, which we did not earlier explain to her. She came to no harm, but for the sake of her chastity decided not to wash her face for a few days.

Father and I left Mother behind and went back to Frau Eidam's place. On the way, we had another look at the heap of rubble that was our flat. It was impossible to know where you are. The whole area was just a huge heap of bricks, timber, broken furniture and plaster, all of it covered by snow. Somewhere under it all were our belongings and Father's office for concrete silos.

In that office was my winter coat and as I stood on top of the rubble I tried to find the location of the office by taking bearings on various landmarks. After moving a few steps I was satisfied that area might be where I should look for and started to shift a few bricks. Suddenly the gray of my winter coat could be seen and Father and I started to throw the rubbish to the side, until my winter coat was free and I was delighted to wear it once again.

Going back we decided to go towards the International ghetto and make enquiries about friends and try to find some of them and some members of our families. Outside most of the houses the dead were stacked waiting for the hand carts to collect them. People were still dying in their hundreds of illness and starvation.

Frau Eidam let us in and followed us into our room. She wanted to talk to us about one of her ex-girls and her young man who want to move into the room left vacant by the Romanian. What would our reaction be, she asked us. We didn't understand, until she told us that the young couple were living at an Arrow Cross House until a few days ago.

Father and I had a discussion in private and we decided that we had our lives given to us many times by others and therefore we should this time and only this time give a murderer his chance. We promised Frau Eidam that we shall not report them, but we asked her to make sure that we do not meet them. Next morning, Frau Eidam had a big piece of ham and two eggs each for us. She admitted that it is from "them" and neither of us would eat it, even 'though we were starving.

On another day when we returned to our room at Frau Eidam, we found the bed to have been used in our absence. Frau Eidam very proudly told us that a couple of Russian came looking for women and she took them both on. So satisfied were they with the service provided that they sent two more of their comrades along and she received tobacco and food for her trouble. However, Father was not too keen on his bed being used and in any case it was time for us to become a family unit again.

Every day we were visiting Mother and at the same time searching for friends and relations. When ever you met somebody even remotely familiar, you stopped and asked about people. It was surprising how fruitful this method was in locating people. It was this way that we found some friends who had a spare room available in their flat for us and we moved in within a week of liberation.

Our room was our home for the next 6 months. We only had one double bed and all three of us slept in it. It was bitterly cold and we slept in our overcoats. We shared the bathroom with the other three families in the flat, but not the kitchen. We all cooked in the courtyard on open fires, until later when we all had our own little wood fired stoves in our rooms.

Our new home was opposite the house where my grandmother lived with her daughter and Paul László, Bözsi and Susan. This was handy because we could help each other with food and other exiting things, such as packaging paper, which was given to us, so that we could "glaze" our window with the paper or Father finding a hand grinder when his brother-in-law located some bird seed, that could be ground to be used as flour.

A month ago the Germans were camping in the house where our room was and under a heap of rubbish I found some bread hard as nails and green here and there. Mother cooked it again and again until it could be chewed and we thought it a most satisfying soup.

Every morning I went off to find food or whatever else. It wasn't easy, because the Germans in the hills of Buda were capable of overlooking all the streets that were at right angles to the Danube. To cross those streets was quite dangerous, because the Germans used to position sharp shooters to shoot across the Danube at every person who was to be seen. Thus you either had to walk many extra kilometers to get from one place to the other or else you had to take a great risk and rush across the endangered streets.

The streets were still covered in snow and one day I went out scavenging with one of Father's employees who had a club foot and who could not run. Somehow I had a sledge for the purpose of pulling along the large quantity of loot I was hoping to find. However, realising that Robert will never make it across the street which was being strafed by some German sharp-shooter, I rushed across with a long piece of rope and with the help of some other people pulled him across the street on the sledge. The Germans must have been so surprised that they omitted to shoot.

Another danger was being sent by some GPU man to Siberia. The GPU or NKDV or the Soviet Security Organisation was charged by Stalin or Beria to get a certain number of prisoners of War's to man the Gulag camps in Siberia. The green capped NKDV officers positioned themselves in empty shops and as a likely candidate for POW-ship came along, they reached out and dragged them in. No amount of explanation helped, you had only two choices: to go Siberia or to escape. I choose the latter a total of three times, the last time I was 25 kilometres out of Budapest and it took me 2 days to get back to Budapest.

These food scavenging trips were sometimes most rewarding. On one occasion I went to a landowner friend of Father's, who refused to give me anything, which I would not have minded, but he and his wife were most offensive. They were still living in the shelter, so after they refused to give me anything I returned upstairs to their flat, found some food in their pantry and pinched a few of their things, such as a fountain-pen and an alarm clock and promptly gave his goodies to a Russian who gave me a rucksack full of carrots, an absolute lifesaver those days.

I was reduced to a weight of 42 kilograms, against my normal weight of about 65 or more and most other people were also reduced to walking skeletons. Perhaps Mother was in the best condition of all of us. At the time she was 51 years old and Father was 53. They appeared to me as rather old and weak people, who needed all the help I could provide. The streets were full of people going round scavenging and we could see people, wearing expensive pieces of clothing, carrying knives, sacks and hand basins, following the starving horses, waiting for them to fall and then cutting them up and carrying the horse meat home for their own families. Although we were hungry too, I never once participated in a horse meat collecting exercise.

A few days after liberation we located the wife of Mother's stepbrother. She was without news of her husband who was later reported to have been executed by the Arrow Cross, maybe because he was a comunist. Juci was with her two children, Ági who was about 3 and Peter who was less than 6 months old. Agi weathered her deprivation pretty well, but Peter, who was being breast fed by a starving woman, was suffering from being undernourished and obviously in a bad shape.

We searched for a doctor and found our old lady pediatrician, who was reputed to have saved my life when I had diphtheria the second time. She went to see Peter and told everybody that it is most unlikely that he will live, especially as he vomited everything and was too weak even to cry. I understand that he was the same weight at 6 months as when he was born.

One day my find was some brown powder which I found on the ground outside a chocolate factory. Mother recognised it as soy powder and with some water made biscuits from it. We ate some and it was quite good, although very crumbly, so we took some biscuits and also some soy powder along to Juci in the hope that she and little Agi can benefit from it. While we were there I gave Peter some of this horrible biscuit, which was more like a piece of bread than a cake and Peter seemed to swallow it. Seeing this Juci mixed some powder with water and fed it to the baby and surprisingly he did not throw up.

According to our lady doctor, Rella Beck, this was the turning point for my step-cousin Peter, who to-day is a well known research doctor specialising in cancer.

All this time the shooting was going on. The Russians were shooting at the Germans in Buda and they were shooting at everybody they could see. The Germans were fed by air drops and we could see the Junkers 52's making their run and dropping the parcels, some of which actually reached the soldiers in Buda.

On an occasion I saw the Russians shooting down one of the JU 52's. It caught fire and slowly commenced to fall like an autumn leaf. After what seemed ages a parachute appeared, than a second, third and so on. One of the parachutes caught fire and without his parachute the man fell rapidly. Some of the Russian soldiers looked on without much

interest, but some got their rifles and machine pistols and started to shoot at the defenseless parachutists.

Early February the Germans decided to break out of encircled Buda and try and reach Germany. The battle went on for quite a few days and those Germans who were not killed, were taken prisoner. Thus within the months of our first being liberated on the outskirts of Pest, the whole of Budapest was occupied and liberated.

We started to reclaim our belongings from the people who were hiding them for us. Some people held on to property by claiming that they never received them for safe keeping, some blamed a Russian for pinching it while the majority delivered the goodies without any problem. My Leica camera, an almost priceless commodity during the war was never returned and Mother lost some of her jewels through friends who blamed the Russians for pinching them.

I remember that when we asked for it to be returned, the farm manager of Hungary's largest landowner told us that he buried Mother's solitaire under a tree in the country and he cannot return it until they can travel there. Seeing that we gave him the ring after the farm was occupied by the Russians, his excuse was quite fishy. However, after a month of worrying about the bona fide of the man, he returned the ring.

Within our old flat we had our clothing and furniture and they were removed by my latin teacher who took over our flat. It was an easy matter to reclaim these, all we had to do was to visit him, he was surrounded by all our things, furniture, porcelain, paintings, even my dinner jacket. The only thing he didn't take were the family photographs.

Mother's silver cutlery used to be housed in a most elaborate wooden case, which seemed to be more expensive than the cutlery it housed. This also disappeared and my teacher insisted that he never took it. On one occasion when I was sifting through the rubble of our old flat I noticed something gleaming in the sunshine. It turned out to be a fork or knife and I started to shift the dirt to get nearer to where the case was. I found lots of cutlery, but not the box.

It was an unwritten law of the time that one should not be without a rucksack or hold-all to carry whatever food or clothing one finds and on this occasion too I had a rucksack available to load my find of cutlery into. I put them all into the rucksack and found it almost impossible to lift it in my run down state. I managed somehow and carted it back to our room. Mother took stock and almost unbelievably not one item was missing.

We were most grateful to the Russians to have liberated us, but at the same time we were getting fed up with being caught by the NKDV or having our wrist watches taken by the watch crazy Russians and being constantly stopped on the street to labour for them in loading trucks, etc.

Thus I jumped at the opportunity to go 250 kilometers behind the lines, towards the East, where my cousin Bözsi's husband was after returning from Russia and a Labour Battalion. He made it in spite of terrible experience, that cost him one of his eyes, and he arranged for his wife and her daughter to come to him to Nyiregyháza. I was ready to go by next day and had no doubt that my parents will be able to get by without me.

The truck that was to take Bözsi, Susan and I towards the East, where we heard there was ample food and peace and quiet and safety was an American Studebaker, supplied to the

Russians, who in turn gave it to the new Hungarian Government being formed in Debrecen, some 80 kilometres from the place we were going. The driver and an armed guard were from the new Hungarian army and the passengers, in addition to us three were an illustrious mob.

One of them was a priest, who wasn't, and he turned out to be the son of Miklós Kállay, the last Prime Minister prior to the German occupation. Another was the Secretary of State for the Foreign Ministry, whom I met later in London, where he became a travel agent. A third fellow was dressed in civilian, but in actual fact he was a priest. There were others also, all of them involved or about to be involved in the new Government being set up under Russian patronage.

We traveled most of the day and all night and on the outskirts of Debrecen, we were again stopped by a Russian road block. We thought that they are also looking for POW material and therefore I put a scarf over my head, pulled out a few locks of hair and decided to look lady like. However I nearly came to grief because this particular bunch of Russians were looking for female company and decided that I am just what they would like. However, after they asked me to step down from the truck and had a closer look in better lighting their desire cooled and I was allowed to get back on to the truck and we carried on.

Nyiregyháza was a small town where Sanyi Simkovits' family came from. When he was in Russia, he got across the lines and then moved towards Hungary behind the Russian lines, finally arriving in the town of his birth and childhood. He was a man who was capable of living by his wits and demonstrated this quality by surviving, getting back to Nyiregyháza and becoming quite well off while waiting for Budapest to fall. He had lots of brothers and sisters, most of them deported to Auschwitz, and his family had a better than usual rate of survival. One of his brothers was a butcher and thus we were never short of good food.

I lived with Sanyi, Bözsi and Susan for quite a few weeks and while there I kidnapped Sanyi's illegitimate child from his grandparents who were bringing him up. I also had my teeth fixed up by our friend and neighbour for whom I worked as a helper in his dental technician practice.

One day in the main square of the Town a few people were talking to a man who was wearing striped pajamas. I joined them and heard the man telling his experiences in a place called Auschwitz. He was talking about gas chambers, crematoriums that were working day and night, beatings, hangings and medical experiments. I can honestly say that I believed that he must be exaggerating. I could believe everything about the Hungarian Arrow Cross, but that the Germans who had Goethe, Schiller, Beethoven and Bach should be accused of systematically gassing people I could not believe, - even after seeing and experiencing what I went through.

It wasn't until some others, including Sanyi's sister returned from Auschwitz, that we started to piece things together and started to believe the unbelievable. Not that we were outraged at hearing what happened in the camps of the SS, we all had our own horror stories and were absolutely saturated with horror, thus we got more and more blasé about it.

After about 3 weeks I returned to Budapest. The trip took 3 days and I had to hang on to freight trains, getting lifts from Russians on their trucks and even walk. I found Mother

and Father well, but having delivered all the food I could carry I set out again to go back to Nyiregyháza. The population in Budapest was still deprived of such luxuries as bread and food and there was still an air of uncertainty due to the political situation. Thus there was no point in my staying and I travelled East once again. This time it took me 5 days to make the trip.

After a month or so, I had news that Mother was sick and so I stocked up with food and arrived back to Budapest to find that by the time I got home Mother was well again. Matters started to settle down in Budapest, so it was time for me to settle also and I returned to Budapest. There was still very little to do there and people were busy trying to forage enough food and fuel to survive.

Father looked around in his warehouse and found a circular saw and a small engine. With the help of Peter Agocs, who started to come into the business as circumstances, such as transport allowed, the saw and engine was mounted on a small cart to be pulled by me and my assistant along the streets. This was the first business venture my father arranged for me and would have been the closest to having been a monopoly.

The idea was that once we saw a bombed out area, we pulled the cart towards it, started up the engine and commenced to cut up the timber lying around. The people heard the whine of the saw from miles and came to either buy the cut up wood or else invite us to come to their neighbourhood and cut their timber into manageable logs for them to use it as fuel. When evening came, we were tired, dirty and full of money. Soon Father had three teams going and I became the manager of the teams, rushing around from site to site and making bookings.

All went well until one of my labourers was recognised as an Arrow Cross guard, accused to have been a murderer and he was arrested on a site between two jobs. While I was arranging for a replacement his partner absconded with the day's takings, and for good measure taking with him the petrol can and the mobile circular saw. We still had other outfits, but the next day the young man who started with me in the early days of my being a sawing contractor made a small mistake and cut off two of his fingers. I rushed with him to a hospital with him insisting that I wrap his fingers in a handkerchief so that he may keep them until they may be buried with him when eventually he dies.

After these misfortunes Father decided that we should give up this line of business while I still had all 10 fingers and he sold the carts and saws and I worked for him in his business during the day and during the night we all stayed together with Father and Mother in our one room home. We still had our posh home up the Rose Hill, but of course it was quite impossible to live up there, due to the total absence of transport and also because all bridges between Buda and Pest were destroyed by the Germans when they retreated to Buda in January.

It was only in May that Father and I took two days off to visit our old home on the hill. We walked to the bank of the Danube, negotiated with a man who was to row us across to Buda and having got to the other side we climbed up the hill to Father's dream house.

It ceased to be a dream it was more like a nightmare!

After the opera singer moved out of the house, it was let to Herr Diener, a business friend with whom Father established a Vitamin Laboratory for the production of Vitamin D for animals. He was German and Father thought that he will help us in case of need. To

reinforce his contacts, the German business friend moved into the house with his friend, who happened to be a General in the Gendarmes. With a combination like this, we could not fail in having a privileged position, Father thought. He was disappointed. Herr Diener considered Father a liability from the day the Germans occupied Hungary and ceased to know him. The partnership automatically became his only, the rent was unpaid and that was that.

Neither the General nor Diener waited for the Russians. They disappeared in the direction of Germany never to be heard of again. The house was occupied by a military unit of university students and they were stationed in the house amongst the African curios that Diener collected and the enormous classical paintings by old masters, that the General appropriated from Jews after their deportation. Some of these paintings were quite valuable and it must have been disappointing for the General not to have been able to enjoy them peacefully for the rest of his life.

After the university students it was the turn of the German Army to move in and they gave way to the Russians, who moved in with their horses and campfires.

We had a nice garden front and rear, but the house was built to be lived in. Downstairs we had three very large rooms, two of which were separated by a folding door arrangement. Beside these two rooms was the third, with a dining table which could be opened to allow something like twenty people to sit around the table. Also downstairs was the kitchen, a pantry, a toilet and an enclosed verandah. Upstairs we had two bed rooms only, bathroom, a maid's room, a third toilet and a very large laundry, which housed a boiler, a bathtub, various sinks, enough space for ironing. There was also a cellar where the coal and the central heating was kept and there was a flat, i.e. a room for the Janitor, his wife and child in the same cellar, but with a separate entrance.

We had large quantities of staff to run the household when we lived there: Irma, our sick domestic, a chambermaid, a cook, the cleaning lady, who was usually the janitors wife, the janitor who was also the chauffeur. When we were small we also had a governess and additionally the washing was done by the washer woman, the ironing by the ironing lady and the mending by the sewing lady. There was a part time gardener too. All this was not really extraordinary, people used to be real cheap in prewar Hungary.

The past was hard to believe, when we went into the house. The fine parquet floors, which were taken up twice, because they were not good enough for the architect, were still there, but after housing horses the place was high with horse manure. It was only when we looked a bit closer that we realised that to keep warm, the various armies living there built campfires in the rooms, which did not improve the standard of the floor.

The toilets were all blocked up and full of excreta, the walls were filthy with messages in three languages and there were the paintings! Being from a period when painters liked to draw cherubic people with large breasts and genitals being hidden by thighs and flowing materials, the occupiers of our house decided to make up for the missing detail. When they had done so, they must have discovered that these areas will be a suitable target to aim for and used Herr Diener's arrows and spears from Africa to practice with.

Upstairs was not much better, but being more exposed to the wind, it was less objectionable as regards stink and we moved a bed far away from the toilet into what used to be the children's bedroom and Father and I went to sleep on the same bed. However, it was impossible to sleep. After weeks and weeks of inactivity the bedbugs and

fleas suddenly had food again and they attacked us. We lit a candle and could not believe our eyes, there were millions of bedbugs poring forth from everywhere. We sat up all night and waited for the morning, so that we may go back to Pest. It was not until Father could engage some people to clean the house, that we ever saw it again, and once it was cleaned other people wanted to move in and did.

Father soon became active in his business again. Although due to the land reform the land was given to the peasants, they still needed his bits and pieces for their machinery. Because of the rampaging inflation, they usually bartered with food and soon Father ran out of people to give the food to and starts to sell his bags of flour, sides of pork, etc.

News of this got to the Mayor of Budapest, Vas Zoltán, a well known Communist, who just returned from Russia with the titular rank of General. He calls for Father and puts him to work making barter deals for food. Father's idea is to send out trucks full of spades, hand hoes and hay forks into the country and accept food in return. Soon 10 trucks are plying their way in the country and bringing back the farm produce to feed Budapest. Eventually these trucks carry other commodities into the country.

Father is constantly asked for blow-lamps to heat up tractors prior to starting them. In 1936 a Hungarian tractor was copied by the Soviets and every Russian peasant soldier can recognise the kerosene lamps as being identical to the one they use back home. They pinch every one they see and while the tractors stay in Hungary, in the absence of the lamps, no one can start them. Father arranges for a Swedish sample to be cut in half and manufactured for him. He orders 5000 and sells them in the first week. Every day a long row of horse drawn carts line in front of the Kálmán Street office and warehouse to exchange food for the lamps. Father becomes a rich man once again because the food received is sold.

When the Mayor hears of this he orders another 10,000 lamps from Father and thus Father becomes a well-to-do capitalist once again. In view of the fact that at time there were only 12,000 tractors in Hungary, it is possible that to this day the City of Budapest has ample stocks of kerosene lamps, for the use of starting tractors.

Seeing that inflation by then is devastating, - we count not in millions, but in million millions, I have to carry his money to the Stock Exchange every evening and buy Pound Sterling bank notes. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly my brother John is in England and if we will go anywhere it will be to England, but also because 5 and 10 pound notes are printed on fine rice paper they can be folded and hidden easier.

One evening I bicycle to the Exchange too late to get Pound Sterling notes and our broker buys me 55 Egyptian Pounds. Father just about murders me, when he is told. He calls me an absolute idiot, who has no other aim in life but to drive his father crazy. When later, he sends all his pound notes to England, they are all found to have been forged by the Germans, only the Egyptian notes are genuine.

The Mayor of Budapest in the mean time gives the greatest accolade to his unpaid helper: he is given a three wheeler utility truck with a driver. A greater praise no communist official can give. However the car is not available, when a message arrives to our office for him to go to the offices of the Red Cross. I recognise the message as something extraordinary and run about 6 to 7 kilometres to the office to receive a 25 word message from John from England. The message is cautiously addressed to either Kálmán József or Kálmán Ilonka or Kálmán István or Balázs Imre or Balázs Lili or Vadász Andor or

Vadász Margit or Vadász Eva and says that he is well, anxious to hear from us and sends his love and gives his address.

So John is alive and well! I am electrified into running back the large distance. Luckily I met Father in his car. He also becomes delirious from the news and sends me in his car to Mother to tell her the news.

I bound up the stairs and find a hairless stranger in our room, wearing an overall, but half naked drying himself. Who is he? He throws his arm around me, cries and kisses me. Thin as he is I am surprised to see that he has breasts. "He" is Klári, my Mother's cousin, my favourite aunt, just arrived from Auschwitz. Where is Mother? I find her in the next house doing some washing. I tell her both news items and she can hardly come home to meet Klári, she is that much overwrought.

Klári is the only one of our relations who returns from Auschwitz. Two more cousins with their daughters come back from Bergen Belsen, where they were in a demonstration camp, kept in good shape for inspection by the Red Cross.

All the others who were deported stay away for ever.

PROLOGUE (continued)

I got to the hotel, rang the bell, and after a lot of questions by the porter, who came down from his bed in his underwear, I was admitted into the hotel. Yes, George was still in the hotel, so were his other friends. Yes, he had a bed for me, Mr Shillinger had arranged it. It was on the first floor, room 11, next to Mr Shillinger's room.

I went upstairs alone, dropped my luggage in my room and knocked on George's door. "Enter" and I did. George was in bed, smiling. His other two friends were also in their bed, they were also smiling. There was a man sitting at the table and he introduced himself as the member of the political police. He was also smiling. I cannot now remember for sure, but I think I was the only one who was devoid of all smiles.

At that stage how was I to know that being arrested was all that funny?

Shillinger or Peter Kardos and the others had to be lunatics to play such a stupid practical joke on me. But it was not a joke, although even I had to agree afterwards that it was funny. Two days earlier George and his mates had been raided by the police and they were searched for currency. It was obvious that their reason for being in a border town was to sneak across the border, but even in Hungary intentions were difficult to prove. The police found nothing, but my friends were arrested just the same and taken to the lockup.

However there was insufficient space in the jail and they were sent back to the hotel under escort and under arrest. The poor little sleepy cop, for whom they bought food in the dining room guarded them during the night, while another detective was guarding them during the day.

When I arrived I was immediately searched in my room, but held my actual US dollar greenbacks folded up in my hand, while the detective was going through my belongings. Afterwards the detective went back to the larger room and sat at the table guarding the three who were enjoying the sleep of the innocent.

Next day the detectives were withdrawn but we were told to stay in the hotel under house arrest. We did, but then suddenly more detectives descended on us and searched us for currency and gold, - two commodities we were not supposed to have. Nothing was found on us, we were getting cleverer and luckier all the time. Just the same, we were ordered to report in the afternoon at Police HQ, and as we approached it, I saw a person I knew and he was wearing the uniform of a high ranking police officer. He was the son of Father's agent in Szombathely and I did not realise that he was in the police when Father gave me his address.

I told him our story, hoping that he can help and he told me that while he is in charge of the Police for the whole town, he has no connection with the political police. However, he told me that we should not worry, the worse that could happen to us was 3 months in the cooler.

That evening I collected all the gold and the currency we possessed and took them to my Police Captain mate, who offered to mind them for us. I also enjoyed a very good dinner

cooked by his maid, who used to be the maid in the sanatorium where I was in 1943. Small world!

Next day we were approached by a local contact who told us that if we could be at a certain place at 11 p.m. we would be taken across the border for \$20 each. So I climbed the first floor window of our hotel-prison, climbed down the pipes and went back to my Captain for our valuables and, with my pocket full of goodies such as sovereigns, jewels and dollar notes, set off for the meeting place, to which my friends would also come with our luggage. They arrived in the darkness, clattering along with the push cart they had pinched from the hotel. The noise, in the quiet of the curfew was deafening.

Suddenly, there were shouts and shots to be heard. Our contact came running and told us to scatter, because Russian Military Police had shot at the Russians, who were to take us across the border. We ran back to the safety of the hotel, where we were greeted by several of our detective friends, who once again went through all our belongings and had us stripped to locate our goodies. How we managed to hide them? With sleight of hand, but as we had everything we possessed on us, things were rather more difficult this time round.

The detectives told us that next day we were to be sent back to Budapest, because the police in Szombathely were fed up with us. Indeed they came to collect us at about 5 p.m. next day, walked us to the station and kept watch over us while we waited for the train to depart for Budapest. While they were watching some of us, the others were unloading our luggage on the other side of the train and hiding it. When the train finally left, we waved to the cops and before the train could gather speed, jumped off on the other side and hid until a decent interval had elapsed; then we walked out of the station.

We were fed up about our sojourn in Szombathely and we were becoming desperate. We have decided that this time we would simply engage a taxi, ask the driver to drive us to the border and walk across. To hell with all the rumours and the dangers of crossing a well guarded border. However as we left the station, a fellow walked up to us and asked us if we want to go to Austria for \$20. We said yes and expected him to disclose that he was a detective and arrest us. Instead he led us into the yard of a nearby house where stood a Russian truck and around it some 30 people waiting to be driven to Austria.

Eventually enough people assembled and we paid \$10 each to the driver and another \$10 each to one of our own representatives. The man organising the whole affair, told us that he is a courier, who goes across the border two or three times every week and that it is all very simple, yet he asked us solemnly that under no circumstance should we move or cry out, even if we were shot at. We got into the truck, were covered by tarpaulin, then hay was loaded on top and we were soon off.

The trip was less than comfortable. There were over 30 people in the truck, together with their luggage and the way they could fit us in would have been cramped for sardines. There was no air under the tarpaulin and the hay and we were exhausted by the time the truck started on its shaking journey.

Half an hour later we stopped. We must have been at the border, because we heard our Russian driver speak in Russian and we also heard the Austrian Guards speak in German. After another 15 - 20 minutes the truck halted again and we disembarked. We were jubilant, there were people who kissed the ground and others who were hugging each other. Our courier received the second half of the money, warned us to be quiet until

we saw the light come on in the peasant house, he pointed out in the distance and suggested that some German speakers approach the peasant for directions.

We waited till 4 a.m. and then decided to awaken the farmer. We had a woman with us who was ready to have her baby any minute, and she started to have pains, so we wanted to move off quickly. George Shillinger and I started off towards the house practicing in German what we shall say. In answer to our knocking the farmer came to the window and didn't understand a word of our German. How could he, we were still in Hungary! We had been taken for a ride and had paid for a round trip from Hungary to Hungary.

When Shillinger and I returned to the group they were not amused. We told them that we were about 5 kilometres away from the border so we decided to walk towards it, whatever the risks. We set out and walked and walked. The pregnant lady did not. She was carried.

After a while we approached a farmer working in a field. Leaning on his hand hoe, he told us that we were still in Hungary but we should follow him. We did and he walked us across the first of the ten borders we had to cross and handed us over to his colleague in Austria. They were both from the Hagannah, the underground Jewish army of Palestine, who were stationed all round that area to lead the people across the border. Not just their people either, - they helped anyone who was trying to cross the border.

From then on we were in their hands. We were taken into a farm shed, fed, given false papers to legalise our being in the Soviet Zone of Austria, put on a bus and sent into Vienna (Border No. 2). There we were fed, given a different set of false papers, put on a special tram and sent into the US Zone of Vienna (3), where we were billeted in the Rothchild Hospital, the famous assembly point for refugees from the East.

For the next three days we enjoyed the sights of the US Zone of Vienna. The signs of war, the devastation and the great shortage of almost anything was all round us, but so was the famous spirit of the Viennese. The coffee houses were full with people, yet there was no coffee to be bought, the bier gardens resounded with Strauss in spite of the fact that their beer was less intoxicating than the Danube.

Early one morning about 400 people from the Rothchild Hospital boarded specially rented trams and we were taken in to the Soviet Zone of Vienna (4), to a station where the train was waiting for us. It was back to cattle trucks, but we knew that at the end of the trip freedom and fortune awaits us. We made ourselves comfortable in the trucks in case we will be traveling for weeks. We also made the interesting discovery that the US Army personnel guarding the train and us, all spoke Jiddish much more fluently than English, suggesting that perhaps they were sent from Palestine rather than from the USA, to look after the Jews of Eastern Europe on their way to freedom.

Our train crossed from Vienna into the Russian Zone of Austria (5), then the US Zone of Austria (6), at which time the Russians checked the papers of every person on the train and interrogated some. Next we stopped for a night just outside the former concentration camp at Mauthausen, and next day we arrived to be billeted in a former SS Barracks in Salzburg. We were allowed to visit the sights and our train left next day to cross into the French Zone of Austria (7), the French Zone of Germany (8), the British Zone (9) and finally the American Zone of Germany.

It was not the most direct route, but the organisation needed to overcome the problems caused by the Russians and the many Occupational Zone regulations and the fact that the

British were trying to keep prospective Jewish infiltration of illegal migrants away from Palestine, was most impressive.

We wanted to go to Munich, where three of my relations were already in the Funk Kaserne. When our train arrived to Augsburg, we jumped train and traveled to Munich under our own steam. At the Railway Station of Munich we engaged a porter to take our luggage and lead us to a public bath-house for a long needed bath. We asked the porter if we should pay him with money or if he would prefer some cigarettes. He choose the latter, so we gave him a box of 100 Hungarian cigarettes, which pleased him. Later we found out that in the crazy, cigarette based German values our tip to him was equivalent to 3 months' wages.

After our bath, we decided to eat. We sold some cigarettes to a member of the milling black marketers outside the Hauptbahnhof, parked our luggage and walked towards the center of the city, through the bomb damaged streets. 13 months after the war finished, the pavements and roadways were cleared, but few were the houses which were not damaged and the badly damaged buildings were just heaps of rubble.

There were some shops open, but almost nothing useful to buy. Some of the food shops had long queues outside and we finally found one shop which we could enter without waiting in a long line. It was obvious that this food shop had little to offer. We noticed that they had a few withered black bread rolls and wanted to buy some. However, to our surprise, we should have had food ration cards even for a single one of those little dried out dumplings.

Seeing our disbelief, which turned into terror at the thought that we will starve in Munich, the shop keeper gave us a roll each and sold us a little portion of some indescribable muck, masquerading under the highfalutin name of "Lebensmittel Marken Freie Brot Schmiermittel" (i.e. Food Ration Card Free Bread Spread), which, in spite of its exciting sounding name was ground soya beans, made spreadable with the use of some chemical. Certainly not very nourishing, but we were most grateful for the kindness we experienced from this member of the hated Master Race.

Lets make no mistakes, we despised and hated the Germans at this stage of our lives, for what they have done to us and the rest of the World. We noticed that there were almost no Germans who admitted that they were Nazis, there were no Germans who admitted that they screamed themselves hoarse at the Nazi Rallies before and during the war. We made no difference between one German and another, in our view they were all guilty. It has taken us quite a few weeks living in Germany before we realised that some were innocent and many months before we realised that some were actually disapproving what Hitler and the Nazis stood for but had as little chance to influence events as we had in Hungary.

After our repast we got on a tram, which meant hanging onto the handles on the steps of the speeding tram and working your way into the inside as people disembarked along the way. We had a long trip to the outskirts of München to the Funk Kaserne, once occupied by the Radio and Radar specialists of the German Wehrmacht, now the home of some 10,000 DP's.

The gates were guarded by uniformed DP's from Yugoslavia and we were not admitted. After some delay and with considerable difficulty we sent word to our relations inside and they managed to smuggle us in. As we walked through the main square of the camp, we

recognised some people we knew. They were from the train we had left in Augsburg, and had we stayed with them we would have arrived there hours ago with a great deal less effort and would have made it into the Kaserne legitimately. It would have meant DP Status, ration cards, pocket money from US charities, etc. and a palliace to sleep on in a dormitory.

Anyway, we arrived to the US Zone of Germany.

The next task was to get out of there as quickly as possible.

WEST GERMANY

In June 1946 Germany was a very undesirable place to live in. If you had to be in Germany it was advisable not to be a German. Our situation, with or without official Displaced Person status was much better than if we would have been Germans, but it was still pretty difficult. There was a scarcity of food and even when we obtained our food ration cards, the food allocated for us was the same as for the local population and was completely insufficient. Although almost everything was rationed, there were some items which were available only on permit.

If you needed a pair of shoes, that need had to be proved and demonstrated to a bureaucrat, whose job was to issue shoe purchase permits. If you finally received a permit, you could then order the merchandise, wait 2 or 3 months and collect it from the shoe shop, when available. Having crossed the borders in my knee high riding boots and having carried one pair of shoes, which were soon in need of repair, I spent days in trying to get a permit to buy a new pair or at least get a permit for a new artificial leather sole.

There was a shortage of everything and you could buy absolutely nothing. Even the black market was hopeless, there being almost no production of consumer goods and if there was, it certainly did not find its way to the towns, where shops remained empty until 1948.

If being hungry would not have been enough, the winter of 1946/47 was the worst for decades. The freezing weather was not relieved by warmth either in homes or in public places. Some restaurants, schools and movies simply closed for the winter. On the streets people could be seen carting home pieces of timber they found in the bombed ruins of buildings and during the weekends families went into the countryside to forage for some branches off trees for their heater at home. Gas in the homes was rationed and your supply cut off if you used too much. There were regular pre-determined power cuts, dependent on the various districts of Munich, but ad hoc cuts also occurred without any warning.

Prices were controlled and they were the same as during or prewar. The average monthly wage of 150-180 Reichsmarks may have been sufficient to purchase all of the meagre food rations allocated, but was totally inadequate for survival, which had to be purchased on the alternative, i.e. black market. Here people sold their belongings to buy food and the resultant barter system caused the cigarette to become the de facto currency of Occupied Germany, with the providers of the cigarettes, the American Army personnel to become the ruling and rich.

A pair of non-black-market shoes might cost only RM 15.00, - provided one had the necessary permits from the authorities to buy one, while the black market price of a cigarette was RM 5.00, thus three cigarettes bought a pair of shoes.

The same crazy values applied to restaurants and generally service industries. During our stay in Germany we could afford to eat in the best restaurants, albeit we had to have the required ration cards, which were presented to the waiter, who cut off little coupons for 50 grams of meat, 50 grams of bread, 5 grams of butter or fat etc. The menu showed exactly how many grams of what coupons were to be presented for the meal. The price

was also shown, but was of no real importance, provided you had ways and means to obtain cigarettes.

Everybody was doing his or her best to get hold of cigarettes. There was an official ration of 15 or 20 German cigarettes and non-smokers sold them to German smokers. However, the armies occupying Germany provided most of the rest of the cigarettes, required for the functioning of the German economy of 1946-48. Every American soldier received 200 cigarettes per week free and he could buy further packets for 7 cents in the US Army PX store.

Equate the cost of 7 cents for 20 cigarettes available to the GI's to the German average monthly wage, which was the equivalent to 30-35 cigarettes and no explanation is needed to understand why women were waiting knee-high outside any US Army barracks or office. Many were the middle class Germans who asked their wives to do the right thing by their families and find themselves an "Ami" friend.

Suddenly, middle class morality changed in direct proportion to the needs of the family. The ideas of racial superiority expounded by the Nazis were also forgotten as it became obvious that the blacker the skin, the more generous its owner becomes to his blond fraulein.

Those who could not get cigarettes by other means sold their valuables. In this fashion priceless Leica cameras and jewellery were traded for cigarettes and craftsmen like silversmiths, wanted only silver coins to melt down and cigarettes for their labour in exchange for beautiful brooches and silver ornaments. Even cars, which were of little value due to the unavailability of petrol, found their way into the hands of US soldiers, who bought priceless Mercedes tourers, previously owned by high ranking Nazis, with a few weeks' cigarette rations.

In 1947, one of my Father's acquaintances, who was the owner of a not insignificant agricultural machinery factory, suggested to me that maybe I would like to buy his company for 100 cartons of cigarettes. This would have cost an American soldier US\$ 140 at the time, yet to the German it was equivalent to over US\$ 1 million in 1985 terms. No wonder the Americans became somewhat mixed up and bewildered in a Europe they could not understand.

DP's had less access to cigarettes, yet we were not short of them. Most of us worked for the Military Government, UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Aid), Jewish organisations like HIAS or JOINT, Christian aid like CWS, etc., all of whom came to the realisation that paying out cigarettes was more cost effective than spending US Dollars.

Thus most DP's like me had ample cigarettes especially if they did not smoke. This allowed us to be somewhat better off than the locals, who had less opportunities and more commitments. In spite of the fact that we DP's made no secret of the fact that we considered ourselves a rung above the local population, they were surprisingly placid about this and allowed a lot of freedom to those they once conquered and regarded or at least were told to regard a sub-human species.

As far as the Allied powers were concerned, their main intent was to punish the Germans and not to re-educate them or help them in their economic plight. The de-nazification courts were sitting in all the main cities and everybody was supposed to have had a Nazi past unless it could be proven that he was not an active Nazi. Every German was

classified and of those who were thought to be involved in the Party, thousands were locked up in camps waiting to be "de-nazified".

Germany was broken up into 4 Zones, the American, British, French and the Russian, with Berlin also being parceled up in spite of being within the Russian Zone. Additionally, each Zone was further divided into historical principalities, governed separately. The Allied allowed France to take back from Germany areas which they claimed belonged to them, restored Czechoslovakia and Poland and gave large chunks of Germany to these countries also. This applied especially to Poland, whose Eastern areas were appropriated by the USSR and who were given parts of Prussia in the West as a consolation price, thus virtually shifting Poland westward.

With the eastern areas of Germany being taken over by the Poles and Czechs and some areas becoming part of the USSR, millions of Germans were given just a few hours to take to the road towards Germany or else were entrained in cattle trucks to be sent there. History repeated itself, but these deportees were not gassed, but arrived in the Western Zones of Germany and given refugee status.

Most of them arrived penniless and started work almost the day of their arrival. Their will to succeed and their successful absorption into post-war Germany was one of the reasons for the so-called Economic Miracle which commenced in 1948. It was in this year that the tenuous friendship between the Western Democracies and the Communists went sour and the Western Powers decided to aid the Germans to rebuild their country and clean up the economic mess. They realised that Germany will be useful in containing the Russians, whose obvious goal was to make Europe into a Communist Empire and that the Germans will not become enthusiastic partners while they are being punished for their past sins by the Allied military for whose economic judgment they had no respect.

As a first step the Western Powers decided on a currency reform and in spite of Russian protests, issued minimal amounts of the new Deutsch Marks currency in exchange for the old Reichs Marks, which were becoming more and more valueless. In answer, the Russian Zone was closed off and a different currency was introduced in Eastern Germany. As Churchill said: "an Iron Curtain descended upon Europe".

Soon the roads between the Western Zones and Berlin were cut and to feed and fuel the inhabitants of the Western Zones of Berlin, the Berlin Airlift commenced.

In the Western Zones, as soon as the currency reform occurred, every thing became available once again and not against barter, but for money, which was a very scarce commodity. Irrespective of how much Reichs Marks you deposited, you could only receive a very limited amount of Deutsch Marks.

Cigarettes became what they once were and were used for the purpose of being lit and inhaled by those addicted to the habit. They became almost as useless as the old Reichs Mark. Manufacture of consumer goods commenced and efficient output of all products was aided by the fact that most if not all capital equipment having been destroyed in the war, the factories had new technologies and higher productivity. Additionally, German thoroughness and quality was now joined by the limitless energy and the will to work of the German worker, aided by American capital flowing into the country with the active encouragement of the US Government. The Marshall Aid scheme has further helped Europe and especially West Germany, sovereign once again and headed by Herr Adenauer, whose major concern was that the country be re-built and be prosperous.

This was the Germany I left in 1948 to go to England, a Germany which was well on the way to becoming the leading industrial power of Europe once again. However when we arrived in 1946 we could not imagine that defeated, humiliated, bombed out, starving, freezing Germany will ever again be prosperous and happy.

In 1946 we went to Germany not to live there or even to enjoy it, but only as a very temporary measure prior to emigrating to the West. Soon we realised that our next move may take months to organise and we had better find permanent living quarters. Having missed out on official Funk Kaserne status, we obtained visitors passes on a daily basis so that we may return to the well guarded Displaced Persons Camp in the evening to obtain a meal. Late at night we found ourselves an unoccupied bed in a dormitory or an empty palliasse in a washroom and in the morning joined a queue for breakfast.

Obviously this was not the best of arrangements. As luck would have it I got to know a Hungarian guy, who was on the next transport to go to Bremenhaven, the port from where lucky migrants left for the USA. He offered to me his room in the third floor flat of Mrs. Aumuller, widow of a doctor and their 32 years old daughter. The flat was in one of the few houses which escaped almost unscathed the destruction of Munich and with a friend I was to have the use of one room for our bedroom, shared kitchen, bathroom and the sitting room and we were told that the lease also included the use of a typewriter and the daughter.

Robert and I moved in the day after the room was vacated and indeed the arrangement with the flat was first class, with the exception of Hildegard who thought that having two tenants will be twice the pleasure and as soon as we went to bed on our first evening, arrived in our room and sat at the foot of either one bed or another telling risque stories to us and hoping to be invited under the covers. Being unsuccessful in her endeavours she came to the conclusion that we must be shy while together and so presented herself at times when we were on our own. When Robert and I became inseparable, she used to walk in on us while either of us was having a bath, until we found a key which fitted the bathroom door.

At that point it dawned on her that Robert and I must be homosexuals and when she did indicate her sympathies for our tendencies, we decided to encourage her beliefs. However, she became completely confused when we were visited by girls who were obviously our girl friends. Poor old Hildegard, she never really forgave us, yet she looked after both her mother and us to the best of her capabilities.

With some of our original eight, who crossed the Hungarian border now living in Augsburg, the four people left in München kept together while we were in Germany, except Peter Kardos, who got homesick and returned to Hungary. This left George Shillinger, who decided to stay in the Funk Kaserne as an ambulance driver, Robert Tabori and myself, busy resisting the charms of Hildegard.

We made some friends in the Funk Kaserne, who were as much a mixed lot as "we" were. I also had a lot of relations in Munich and being early arrivals they had quite a comfortable and influential existence in the Funk Kaserne. There was Dr Frank Györi and Agnes, my father's cousin's daughter. Another family was Paul Kellner and Clare, the first UNRRA Officer amongst us, with their 5 years old son George. Another one of my relations was Andrew Pór, who had a lovely Serbian girlfriend Vera. She shared a room with her sister Raca, her 4 years old nephew Dankmar and two other girls from

Poland, one of whom was a countess. They adopted us and we and many other camp dwellers could always rely on a cup of coffee visiting them.

Raca was 28 and was married early to a young lawyer in Belgrad, who after the war became Yugoslav ambassador in Brazil. In 1940 she left her husband for a Yugoslav of German extraction and they lived together in Belgrad until in 1941 when the Germans defeated Yugoslavia and her boyfriend turned out to be a German Major, who has been working for the Abwehr. She herself received some death threats because the man she lived with started to wear his German uniform, once the German war machine conquered the Yugoslavs and although she was a proud Serbian, she realised that sooner or later she will have to pay for her love to a "traitor". Her boyfriend was transferred to Berlin and Raca and the child went with him. Soon she got herself a job in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where she became a senior Private Secretary in the Yugoslav section.

When her flat was bombed, she needed accommodation and with the help of Foreign Minister Ribbentrop she was allocated two rooms in the Adlon Hotel, which was then the best hotel in Berlin. While she was living in relative luxury, her mother and two sisters were slaughtered in Croatia. The description is quite fitting because they had their throats cut while sheltering in an Orthodox (Serbian) church. Luckily, the youngest sister, Vera was away from their home in Croatia and thus survived. Eventually, Raca arranged a work permit for her to come to Berlin as her maid.

Two of her brother-in-laws and one of her brothers died fighting as partisans against the Germans and when her only remaining brother was arrested and kept as a hostage in Belgrad, to be shot whenever the next anti-German action was demanding revenge, Raca was given a letter from SS-Chief Himmler, flew in Ribbentrop's plane to Belgrad and brought her brother from certain death to the Adlon Hotel. Within a few weeks she heard that her estranged husband was in a German POW camp and she obtained permission to get him to Berlin, where she found a flat for him and her brother to live in. The two men returned to Belgrad a few months before Yugoslavia was liberated and distinguished themselves fighting with Tito's Partisans.

Raca's boyfriend in the mean time became a prisoner of the Russians, but he escaped and masquerading as a Yugoslav, hid in Poland. After the hostilities he made it back to Berlin, only to find that Raca and Vera became refugees before the Red Army conquered Berlin. Somehow he travelled into the Western Zone of Germany and found Raca living in a Bavarian village. They lived together for a while when he decided to return to Berlin. He did not know for years that he left her pregnant and that she gave birth to a second son. This child, still a baby in 1946, was fostered in a village near Munich.

One of the Polish ladies, the Countess of Baranowska was a very quiet (and quaint) little person. Like all the others in the room, she was a chain smoker, like the others she rolled her own and like the others she would have killed for a tin of Nescafe, which was then a rarity and regarded to be much more upmarket than ground coffee beans. She was very private and her departure to one of the South American countries was hardly noticed.

The other Polish woman used to be a well known acrobatic dancer and came from a theatrical family. Her brother was a famous adagio dancer who danced a snake dance with his wife in the nightclubs of New York. He sent lots of parcels and finally a ticket for his sister, who made it to the USA in late 1946.

It was at their room that I met Erika, an UNRRA officer of Estonian origin and looks, (blond, big and busty) and her uniform and constant laughter impressed me. She was pretty and a well known big shot in the Funk Kaserne and I was frightened to approach her, especially as she was married. However, one day she suggested that I may like to come horse riding with her and some other UNRRA officers. I tried to be excused, saying that I will be busy and I even said that I cannot ride, but she declared that to be unlikely as I was a Hungarian and was wearing riding boots. She left me no choice when she told me that her driver will pick me up at the appointed hour in her jeep.

This was a first class set back to my dreams of paying court to her. I did not know one end of a horse from the other and undoubtedly I would be found out if I ventured to sit on a horse in her presence.

There was nothing else but having a condensed riding course and next day I set out to find a riding school. I paid my few Marks and got a book of 10 tickets. The instructor asked me if I have ever been riding and on being given my truthful answer he allocated to me a docile white horse.

After the first hour of instruction I did not dismount, but handed over my second ticket and carried on. After I finished my third uninterrupted lesson, the riding instructor suggested that I may like to take a breather, but I insisted on carrying on. I should have known better, after all my Father often told me about the agonies he suffered while being a Hussar!

I could hardly get on the tram to get home. I just peeled the underwear off my raw behind and wished for death to come swiftly. Next morning I had a fever and it was impossible for me to move about, so I sent a message to Erika cancelling the arrangements about being picked up next Sunday for riding in Munich's famous English Park with her and her officer friends.

As soon as I could, I resumed my riding lessons and in the event became a reasonable rider of docile horses. I was ready for the invitation to go riding in the Park to be repeated and I did not need to wait too long, at our next accidental meeting in Funk Kaserne, she told me that I will be picked up next Sunday morning.

On the appointed day it was raining, but the jeep and the Russian driver arrived. He spoke no German and conversation was impossible especially as we were busy keeping ourselves dry in a canvas covered jeep driven by a maniac in a downpour. I realised that we will not be riding in the Park, but I did not expect to be driven through the gates of my Riding School. There was nothing I could do, but was hoping to quickly explain to the instructor that he should act as if he would not know me.

I first saw her sitting astride my usual docile white horse. Beside her was standing my instructor, who seeing me called out:

"Guten Tag Herr Kalman, if only I knew you are coming, I would have reserved for you the horse you learned riding on."

Erika burst out laughing at my discomfiture. The fact that she continued seeing me shows that she had a good sense of humour in spite of the fact that once I got to know her, I realised that she did not have an easy life.

She was married at age 16 to the headmaster of her school, who was 26 years her senior. When the Russians were attacking the Germans in the Baltic States in 1944 she was 24 and by that time she was separated from her husband for some time. Just before the Russians annexed Estonia, her mother and Erika decided to escape to the West by boat and her husband joined them. In Germany Erika and her man gave their marriage another chance and as a result a girl was born. Within the next year they moved into the Funk Kaserne, Erika became an UNRRA Officer, the little girl died and their marriage broke up again. However, they and her mother, who was younger than the husband, continued to live in the small flat which they had due to Erika's exalted position in the camp as the Supply Officer.

In September 1946 I got myself accepted as a student at the Technical University, and in addition to my studies, assisted in the rebuilding of the Technische Hochschule (University of Engineering) in München. Some of the lecture rooms were devoid of walls, some had no roofs and professors and students alike worked hard as common labourers to rebuild the University to be weatherproof by the onset of winter.

Being left to my own devices instead of being assisted by my Father in the passing of exams, did not improve my scholastic capabilities and I soon found it very difficult to keep up with my studies, particularly because of having had to understand engineering terms in German. Even George Shillinger, who later became Professor in America found it almost impossible.

At the same time I also had to have a job and so I worked for UNRRA, which gave me sufficient food to live in a fairly comfortable way. Some of my friends became 2nd Class Officers and had certain privileges. Instead I had a paper which stated:

"Mr. Steve Kalman is employed by UNRRA in the capacity of Assistant Personnel Officer and therefore he is entitled to all the rights and privileges to which he is entitled."

Amazingly that piece of paper was accepted by all and sundry and did a great job in gaining me all the privileges to which I was entitled until such time that I too became a 2nd Class Officer.

Not that I ever became anything that was approaching the greatness of an Allied soldier. The pecking order in Germany was very clearly defined: there was the American Officer, then the G.I., then came the British, then the South Africans followed by nothing and then the US negro soldier. Allied soldiers, who had their country occupied during World War II, such as the French, the Dutch, came in somewhere, but there ere not many of them in West Germany. Next the Military Government and UNRRA Officers followed by a huge gap after which came, 2nd Class Officers, D.P.'s and miles later the Germans, who were being humiliated, insulted and broken by the conscious effort of the Occupying Powers, until the Berlin Airlift and the hostility between East and West commenced.

Forgetting about the nervous strain of not knowing when I will get out of Germany and shortages of food, fuel and clothing, I had little to complain about my life in Germany. I could have holidays in good hotels in Berchtesgaden, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Bad Tölz and eat in good restaurants, although far from well. However, we could never relax, because all of our lives revolved around that elusive visa or that passport. It became a mania for us to get out of there and to do so we became capable of anything bar murder.

Almost all of us assumed false identities and made applications to the Americans for visa, using different names, with different assumed backgrounds in different towns. To live in this fashion required good nerves and a lot of time, because we had to live several lives all at once in different places.

Thus cousin Andrew and I had a room in Stuttgart, where we were registered and one of us always had to be there to ensure that we can be contacted. Even when we had a third and fourth person registered in the same flat in Stuttgart, the pressure was quite hectic, because we all lived in Munich and we also were registered for another application in Frankfurt. Those days these places were an overnight 3rd Class train trip away with the passenger feeling quite elated if he got a wooden bench to sit on.

One day Andrew was holding forth in Stuttgart while I was in Frankfurt. By the time I got back to Munich, Andrew's second telegram arrived, urging me to immediately return to Stuttgart, because "the police wants to interview you". I knew that this meant that my application for a visa was now in the hands of the American CIC and I will have to return to Stuttgart to be questioned by them about my political background.

However, before I could travel to Stuttgart I needed at least one night's rest in a bed and I decided to sleep in Munich in my own bed. At 4.30 a.m. I was wakened by Hildegard who was followed into the bedroom by two burly American Military Policemen decked out with sufficient armour to fight a small country. I was allowed to dress, before being handcuffed and taken by jeep to the Military Police HQ and locked up.

About 9 a.m. office hours began and I was taken to an American officer who spoke perfect German. He asked me what vile crimes have I committed and to confess before he allows his men to have some fun beating the truth out of me. I was not quite clear which of my crimes I was to confess and asked him, why he believes that I committed any. He told me to stop lying and gave me a last chance of 3 minutes before the third degree was to start.

While I was counting the minutes, he received a phone call and he left the room, leaving a guard to watch me. I stood up as a mark of respect and while standing I saw on his desk the copy of the telegram in which Andrew was advising me that the police wishes to interview me. It was obvious that this was the reason why the Americans thought that I was being traced by the police for some crime.

When my officer returned I told him, that much as I would like to help him I cannot, because the biggest crime I have ever committed was my seducing the wife of a German police man and than leaving her to face her husband in Stuttgart. He listened in astonishment, found the telegram, read it, realised that I read it too and asked me who Andrew was. I told him. How does Andrew know that the police are after me? I suggested that maybe the stupid woman told her husband and now he wants to beat me up or kill me. I begged him not to send me back to Stuttgart for such a terrible fate, - after all he was a man himself.

He told me that he did not believe a word I was saying, but he will hand me over to the German police, who would get the truth out of me. He rang for a detective who walked with me across the street to the German police station and on hearing that I had nothing to eat, gave me half his lunch. He than checked if the police in Munich wished to interview me and kept me in his room all afternoon, while waiting for an answer. That day I

learned more about crime and detective work than before or since as he was dealing with criminals as varied as wife beaters and bank robbers, not to mention people like me.

There was no answer from Police HQ when evening was approaching and he had to make a decision if he should send me to the German prison in the suburbs or send me home. He discussed the alternatives with me and I suggested to him that I was not a very dangerous criminal and giving me a pass to allow me exit from the Police Station, would be the preferred alternative. He agreed with me and I soon left for home never to hear from the police again.

We were disappointed to realise that nobody really wanted DP's for migrants. The Canadians were only taking expert lumber-jacks, New Zealand wanted telegraph and telephone pole men, Australia was looking for bootmakers. The Americans didn't really want anybody, and certainly nobody who was born in Hungary. According to the US immigration laws, promulgated before WW I, took no notice of the prospective migrants nationality or background and all what mattered was the country in which the person was born. Thus the annual number of Hungarian born, who could be approved to go to the States was 896. This was the total of all Hungarian born from whichever country they applied from. Since a lot of Hungarian born Hungarians were applying for a visa in Hungary, the quota for Hungarian born people resident in Germany was correspondingly reduced. The quota for people born in Germany was 28,000, from Yugoslavia 8,000.

So I wrote to my parents in Hungary and they arranged to obtain a birth certificate from Yugoslavia. Eventually the forged birth certificate arrived to me via England and I obtained background documents regarding my imaginary life in Germany since the war. For the purpose of applying for a US visa I assumed the name of Ivan Kalman, while for everyday purposes I continued to be Stefan Kalman. Unfortunately, some 10,000 others had the same idea and the Yugoslav quota was filled. Even some of my relations sailed to the USA sporting "made in Yugoslavia" birth certificates.

When we realised that even the Yugoslav quota was too small to ensure a speedy trip to the USA, most of us cast our eyes towards becoming eligible for the German quota of migrants. I searched for a German registry office that was destroyed during the war and I invented the person of Walter Kalmann from Hungary, who most fortuitously happened to have been born in Königsberg, a German Town with a burned down Registry Office and annexed by Russia. To create a plausible background I became an accomplished forger of interesting documents.

To create Walter, the first thing to do was to find a printer who still had gothic typesetting slugs and the next was to talk him into printing an obviously illegal birth certificate form. Neither jobs were easy, because the use of gothic letters ceased with the demise of the Nazi rule in Germany. However, with the help of cigarettes and a plausible story for the printer to believe that he has not been acting in a criminal fashion, we had the required form. The next problem was the stamp, which in accordance with practice during the war, had to show a swastika. Not even cigarettes were going to convince the makers of rubber stamps that they should manufacture stamps with the Nazi swastika, so we had to look towards our own craftsmanship.

When in Hungary I watched others making false papers for me, I saw how they made a sealing-wax cast off the Hungarian emblem of a coin. They poured wax into that and they

could then make one or two impressions, which looked as if it would have been made by a rubber stamp.

We started experimenting and after a while our forgeries became quite acceptable. To start with we made one birth certificate extract from Königsberg for Walter Kalmann and another one from another town for Robert's assumed name . To check the quality we showed our works of art to others, who were most impressed. We had lots of commercial offers, but refused to set ourselves up as counterfeiters for financial gain, - being involved for no gain could have been bad enough, had we been discovered.

The only other document we forged was the birth certificate extract from a small village near Munich for Cousin Andrew. He presented it to the American authorities who checked it and accepted it as genuine. He was given a visa in the name of Andrew Pick and eventually emigrated to the United States. Twenty years later he applied for a real estate licence and his secret of not having been born at the place where his birth certificate said he was, was uncovered. In spite of having fathered 6 American boys, he was almost deported, but he was saved by President Eisenhower's presidential pardon.

For Walter's identity I collected all my own documents, real and unreal, and applied for a US visa as a German born Hungarian. My excellent birth certificate forgery gave me some confidence but also a lot of sleepless nights. Not until the news filtered through from the US Embassy that my birth certificate was cleared and I was placed on to the "German quota" did I rest easy. I passed the politics oriented investigation of the CIC also and it seemed that before long I should be asked for an interview with a US consular official at the Embassy.

Soon I received an invitation to present myself at the US Embassy with a prescribed list of documents and all spruced up, I did so. All went well with my interview, until I handed in my old prewar Hungarian passport which was doctored to read Königsberg instead of Budapest as my place of birth. The changes were made by me months ago, and at the time seemed to be satisfactory, but where the ink remover was used on the passport, the colour changed after a while. I have not checked the alteration, since it was made and my chances of being accepted as a prospective citizen of the United States of America dissolved as I watched the American official's face as he and I simultaneously discovered the crude forgery.

After his initial astonished look, he continued with the interview as if nothing happened and concluded it with a promise to be in touch with me. I have not heard from them to this day and I feel certain that my old passport with its many hues and colours is now used by some US school for CIA agents, showing how not to make alterations.

After this fiasco I have given up all efforts to emigrate to the USA. It was obvious that I was not meant to go there or else I was not as clever with my subterfuge as my success in surviving in 1944/45 might have suggested. The miracles which allowed me to survive until then came to an end in the US Embassy that afternoon. Whatever the case, from then on I concentrated on being me, - I have given up my life of crime.

However good my intentions were, I still found it very difficult to get myself organised. I was unable to get any visa to any country and was getting myself into a real nervous pickle, so much so that at one stage of 1948 I had to go into hospital. I was suspected of having jaundice or hepatitis, but I knew that all I had was a nervous breakdown. The hospital was run by nuns and I once again I was impressed by their kindness and hard

work. I also admired their patience while trying to push a rubber tube down my throat to take a sample of my gastric juices.

Soon afterwards my brother John became a British subject and he came to visit me in Germany. It was the first time that we met since January 1939 and because the intervening nine and a half years were quite eventful, we never stopped talking for the 5 days we were together.

We traveled to Frankfurt together and it was in a tram that he told me that after almost 10 years in England his accent is still detectable European, - something I could hardly understand. To prove that one could learn German, and speak it without an accent, I spoke to my neighbour in the tram in my best Bavarian accent complaining about the cramped carriage. He asked me if it is better in Bavaria, to which (in my Prussian accent) I answered: "How would I know, I come from Berlin."

In my Frankfurt digs we were nearly lynched by the landlady, who found some of the chicken and ham Mother sent me from England and who ate everything, while John and I were out for the day. When we returned in the evening, she was desperately sick and accused us of leaving poisoned food around. The same day that John left, she accused me of stealing her silver thimble and kicked me out of her flat at 10 p.m. That night I had an opportunity to see not just a Germany, but a World I have never noticed before.

It was impossible to obtain a hotel room in Frankfurt and I made it to the Main Railway Station, where inside and outside dozens of girls were plying their trade. I approached some men to ask if they would know where I find shelter for the night and they suggested that I can have their bed together with their wives for the night, as soon as they return from entertaining a client, but bed and wife was not available independently.

I tried to find a place in the station's waiting room, but it was crowded with other derelicts and I felt unhappy to lie down on the filthy stone floor. I went to a former air raid shelter, where there were dormitories one could enter and find a bed or a chair to rest on. There was a door man who took a few pennies and allowed you to pass into, what I could only compare to Dante's Inferno, with the blue smoke of cigarette butts added to the flames. I stayed only a few seconds and emerged up the stairs to the darkness of the street, which I roamed for a while, until tiredness and the rain made me seek a dry place within the ruins of a building. There I slept fitfully for a while and when I awoke found that the ruins were crawling with similar dredges of humanity. I hastened to return to my landlady, where within minutes I found her missing thimble underneath her kitchen table.

Soon after John returned to England, he was successful in getting me a Labour Permit to work in Scotland. To get a visa I had to present the Labour Permit at the British Consulate at Frankfurt and I also had to get a passport so that the visa can be stamped onto some valid document. My next problem was getting a passport, but not until I had a visa. It was a Catch 22 situation. I knew that one of my friends moved from Munich to Wiesbaden and it turned out that he could help in getting a Stateless Travel Identity Card for me provided the British Consulate states that they will give me a visa provided I have a Carte d'Identity.

I moved from Frankfurt's British Consulate to Wiesbaden in double quick time and soon I felt elated that after two years of struggle I had a passport, albeit a Stateless one. I rushed back to Frankfurt and arrived ten minutes before the British Consulate was to

close for the weekend. The lady consul was friendly, helpful and efficient and within a few minutes I was the proud owner of a visa and a passport and the hope that one day I will again belong to a country. The feeling can only be understood by others who had the experience of being stateless and hopeless. The British accepted me because I was stateless and I have never forgotten their magnanimity.

As soon as I could, I booked my flight from Frankfurt to London. In view of my illegalities with my applications for US visas I felt unsafe until I got to Frankfurt Airport and my ticket, passport and luggage were checked in. A few minutes before we were to board the plane, the loudspeakers were asking Mr Kalman to report to the US Military Police. I felt certain that they wanted to question me about one or the other of my misdeeds against their immigration procedures. The tension was unbearable and I did not relax until I found that they wanted me only to return to me my raincoat which I left at the ticket counter.

I boarded the DC4 plane for my flight to London. The plane was going to New York, via London and Shannon and Gander and was full of GI brides, - German girls going to be married to US soldiers. I was not envious of others flying to the US, at this stage I was disinterested in migrating to the US, I was thrilled to go to England.

My parents were there since 1947, although after their initial visit in 1946 they returned to Hungary and nearly got caught there. As they got to the Hungarian border, the policeman looked up their names and took away their passports. Without these they were lost, so as soon as they got home they tried to regain their passport.

They engaged a crook solicitor who fleeced them of a lot of money, but to no avail. In the end Father went to the Passport Office within Police HQ where he was unsuccessful. Dejectedly he was walking down the stairs when a girl spoke to him and asked him about me. Father realised that the girl was a friend of mine and when the girl asked him why he was visiting the Police HQ, he told her about the passports. She suggested that he should wait and within a few minutes she returned with the two passports. They left Hungary next day.

Father waited for me at London's Northolt Airport. I was exuberant at the thought of being with my family and in England. When Father engaged a porter to carry my luggage to a taxi, I couldn't allow him to carry it. After all he was an Englishman and I was just a DP.

It has been nearly 10 years, but on the 8th August 1948 all four of us shared once again the same table and a paprika chicken in my parents' small flat in Lichfield Court, Richmond, Surrey.

Three years later I met a girl from New Zealand and we were married on the 30th August 1952. I lived happily ever after, experiencing more contentment than my just rewards.

THE EXPLANATION...

Whenever I left our flat for either the school or Father's office I had to pass in front of the Markó street prison.

The day after he was sentenced to death, ex-Major Ferenc Szálasi, head of the Arrow Cross Party, Leader of Hungary, whose official proclaimed policy was the final extermination of all the Jews in Hungary, asked the President of Hungary for clemency. This was refused and his execution was set for the afternoon.

I was passing the prison and seeing the crowds realised that Szálasi is going to be executed. I became part of the crowd wishing to be admitted.

As he was walking to the gallows people were shouting: S-L-O-W-L-Y. An American soldier broke through towards him and asked him: "Where is my Mother? What have you done to my Mother?"

The hangman grabbed him and lifted him up. They broke his neck in a second or two. He did not suffer. He had it easier than his victims.

I am sorry to say and it must sound terrible here and now, but I am pleased to have been there.

I tried to explain why.

Steve Colman

Killara, N.S.W

September 1983

TAKING STOCK

It is of interest to follow the fortunes of certain people and certain things that are mentioned in my story. First the people and then the belongings:

Peter Agocs and his wife lived in their small house on the outskirts of Budapest. Peter had a spinal problem and spent his last years in a wheelchair. My parents visited them after 1963.

Julius Baskay was persecuted almost immediately after the war. Having been a large land owner and a member of the Upper House, he was a marked man. On the first occasion that he was summonsed to the infamous Political Police HQ at 60 Andrásy Street, he was accompanied by both Father and myself and we insisted in making a statement in his favour. He was released after spending some two or three days in a cell. They returned to their home in the country and lost their land, which was distributed to the peasants. Eventually they returned to live in Budapest and died there. Their daughter married a University Lecturer, visited us in England and was assisted by Mother until they did not need help. Their son, a professional Army officer lives in South America and used to correspond with Father.

General Gábor Gerloczy became Father's employee. He and his wife, a Baroness, translated business letters into English and German for Father. He stayed employed by the business even after Father left for the West. Eventually, he and the Baroness were collected by the police in the middle of the night and deported from Budapest into a small village, where the General worked as a labourer pushing a wheel barrow on some earth moving project. Father and Mother kept sending them parcels until about 1960 when they were allowed to return to Budapest. Around that time they lost contact and Father could not locate them on his subsequent visits to Hungary. They probably left Hungary.

Zsuzska and Karolina (Csöpi) Reszeli live in Budapest in the same circumstances as ever. They are still happy and content with the little they have. Csöpi keeps up her correspondence with Mother and advises her of the problems they have with Zsuzska's health. Mother helps them financially and with hand-me-downs since 1945.

Some time after the war Csöpi became an actress and together with other midgets, gave enormous pleasure to thousands and thousands of children in a production of Snow White and the Seven Dwarf, until a newspaper wanted to show its socialistic conscience and protested at midgets exhibiting themselves in such demeaning fashion. The theatre company was then disbanded and all the midgets lost their livelihood. There is no unemployment benefit in Hungary and Csöpi and her mother had a very difficult time until finally they received work in the form of putting on the gum on to envelopes on a piece rate that allowed them almost no income for 14 hours of work.

When I visited them in 1966 Csöpi was the only person in Hungary who recognised me as she watched from the landing John, his wife Clare and me walking up the staircase. Their little flat was absolutely spotless and consisted of a kitchen, which was Csöpi's bedroom and their bathroom also, and a bedsitter, in which Zsuzska lived with her boyfriend. He was a very sick man who died within a few weeks of my visit.

According to Clare, meeting Csöpi and her mother in 1966 was the highlight of her visit to Hungary. On leaving them, Clare broke down and cried and a similar effect was experienced by my daughter and her husband also.

Vilmos Thiringer escaped to Germany and came to visit us in London and eventually emigrated to America, where he became a male nurse. I met him in London and again in America where I spent an evening with him in San Francisco. He insisted that he cannot remember giving me hay, but if he did, so what? He was a gentleman in both the Olde World-Hungarian and real sense of the word.

George Kelemen I never heard of again, - being a great survivor I am sure he left Hungary and is alive and well.

George Schusztek the third George from my Army days is a well to do businessman in Vienna. He married Bársony Rózsi, who was a star of Budapest, Vienna and Berlin and a Jewess too. She was the only actress I know who on her first return engagement after 20 years has sold out every seat in a sport stadium with 100,000 seats and came back to two repeat performances in the same venue, all sold out. I met both of them in Vienna in 1966. She died around 1976, but I believe George is well.

Thomas Lorand the officers' cook who made a fish dish for his sick comrade has a restaurant in London and became a good friend of mine, Joy and my family. He is married to Enid, an English lady and they have no children. I meet them whenever I visit London.

Uncle Imre Balázs survived the War with his wife. He was hidden in a house in the country and after his experiences in the Arrow Cross occupied school, had the good sense of keeping off the streets until he was liberated. Soon after the end of the war, he saw one of the Arrow Cross guards passing the house he lived in. He followed him along Andrassy Street and when the Arrow Cross man was passing in front of No. 60, housing the Political Police, Uncle started to shout and had the man arrested. He confessed to all sorts of crimes and it was him who told about the killing of 15 years old Susan Kádár.

Subsequently, Uncle Imre became interested in politics and tried to convert all his capitalist relations, including his nephews to socialism. He died at the age of 73 and his wife Lili, a charming gentle lady, followed him some years later. They had no child, in fact Lili had a miscarriage on the day the Germans occupied Hungary in 1944.

Frau Eidam and our family - in spite of our being very grateful and all that, did not keep up the friendship after Liberation. However, one day in 1946 or 1947 she traced Father and arrived in his office and asked for financial help. She did it without demanding it and with such charm, that my parents were pleased to help her.

The three ladies living next door to the brothel were ecstatic at being liberated. Within a month two of them were dead. The Jewish woman, who was hiding there continued to live there after liberation and some two weeks later drunk Russians attacked her. To get away she jumped from the first floor window into the snow, broke her neck and died instantly. A few days later the owner of the flat, the gentile lady, who had an acute heart ailment had a heart attack and died.

My mate from Kecskemét, George Kennedy got back to Budapest riding my bicycle all the way. His father, who was not Jewish, hid him in a day & night bed from October until

liberation in January. Within an hour after being liberated he was taken to work for the Russians and after he loaded the truck he was made a POW by the green capped NKDV and sent to Russia. He returned from POW camp in mid 1946 after spending some year and a half in Siberia.

George Shillinger went to the US and became a mathematician. When I last saw him in 1963, he was Senior Lecturer at one of the New York Universities.

Of the others who left Hungary with me: Peter Kardos returned to Hungary after 3 months in Germany. He took a letter from me to my ex girl friend and nearly married her. He became an engineer and escaped Hungary again in 1956.

Robert Tábori who shared a flat with me in Munich married there and went to live in Paris with his wife and daughter. I visited them there in 1951.

27 Mandula utca, our house on Rose Hill is still there, although in very bad repair. I visited it in 1966, when 2 families lived upstairs and 5 separate families lived in the downstairs area. The basement, where (I am ashamed to recall) lived the janitor, his wife and their daughter, housed in 1966, a women, (who turned out to be the aforementioned little girl) her husband and child and the old lady, who was once our janitor's wife and now his widow. Socialism has not improved their life. The house was taken from Father and Mother and although we could now claim it back from the State, provided we can show that we intend to live in it, the occupiers of the house may live there in undisturbed peace.

Third Floor, 17 Szemere utca, our flat in Town was a home unit and was rebuilt at our expense after the war. I always thought that it was our property, but in fact it was not. Nevertheless, the State took it, lock, stock, barrell and contents and no compensation was paid either for this or the one sixth share of the building which Father and I saw being damaged by cannon fire.

The business was left in charge of my Uncle Imre and Márton Farkas, who was employed by Father for twenty years or more and who returned from the death camps of Germany. However, soon after my parents left Hungary the second time, Farkas and Uncle Imre were summonsed to the Police and interrogated about Father and the business confiscated. Farkas died of a heart attack soon afterwards, his wife blaming the shock of being questioned by the police. The interesting side line to all this is that Father's best known product is still being sold with its original name given to it by Father in about 1937 and also the fact that when Father first visited Budapest in 1962, after an absence of 15 years, the sign outside the old business still proudly displayed the name "KÁLMÁN JÓZSEF". It is worth mentioning here that business was in Kálmán Street, which has connection only with a long gone king of Hungary called Kálmán and not with my Father.

Finally, what happened to the gold? Around 1942 my Uncle Bandi, Eva's father and I carried a big round tin containing 1002 "Napoleon's" i.e. 20 Francs, the equivalent to Sovereigns, together with another round tin containing various gold jewellery with a total weight of over 4 kilograms to Szölösgyörök, a village where his home was, with a view of burying it there for safe keeping.

In the middle of the night Uncle Bandi got up and dug his hole and next night we buried the gold in his back yard, amongst the vegetables. So that the place where it was buried could be described, the spot was at the closest coordinate of the corn silo and the water

well. Indeed it was so easy to describe where the gold was, that some weeks later Father unerringly pointed out the spot to Uncle Bandi.

Somehow, we sent message to John that there is a fortune buried at Uncle Bandi's home and of course we and also Eva's family knew where the gold is. Somebody was sure to survive from the six of us.

While we in Pest were liberated in mid-January 1945, the whole of Budapest was not occupied by the Russians until February and the areas west of Budapest not until March. Thus it was some time before we could consider how to get to Szölösgyörök and how to bring back the loot. There was no transport and there were marauding Russians and even Hungarians who were armed and helped themselves to whatever they fancied. Travelling with gold was positively unwise those days.

It was not until about July or August that we could rent a car with an armed guard and off we went with Father and Uncle Imre. He came to see what could be done about his brother-in-law's property, in case Eva or her parents survived and return from where ever they were. We left very early in the morning, not because we wanted to spend a lot of time there, but because Father thought it might be nice to have a swim in Lake Balaton on the way.

My Uncle's house was deserted. All the windows were still boarded up as they were in May 1944 over a year ago. We realised that the building and its many outhouses must have been used as the ghetto where the few Jews of the neighbourhood were rounded up prior to deportation.

We brought our shovels along from Budapest and having located the spot set to dig for the gold. We dug down deep and still there was no metallic noise to suggest that we found it. We dug a little towards the right, then a little towards the left. Nothing. Before long we had a 2 meter square hole dug deep down.

It was then that a police officer approached us. He turned out to be the son of the other Jewish family of the village, who used to be a tennis coach and what used to be termed a gigolo, because of his wealthy girl friends. He suggested that we will find nothing because all the men and women in the Ghetto were systematically tortured by the gendarmes to give up their existing or non-existing fortunes. To him it was obvious that Uncle Bandi confessed to the gold. Just the same he organised some labourers, who were digging away all that afternoon and half the night until the hole was at least 10 by 10 meters large and so deep that we struck water. We took turns to sleep in the car and it was next morning that the little old man, Uncle Geleta, who used to be looking after the horses and the carriage arrived. He told us that the last time he saw him, Uncle Bandi had a face blue and black from a beating he must have received from the gendarmes.

I only hope they stopped beating him when they found the gold.

I visited Szölösgyörök in 1966. The house was not lived in, but the Communist Party used part of the house.

In 1989 Joy and I revisited the place. The house was rebuilt and became the one and only General Store of the village. As usual it was not open for business in spite of us having visited it during the hours when according to the sign it should have been open.

Seeing that house upset me more than any other sight during my visit to Hungary. To realise that my relations' house is unrecognisable, even if it did not disappear and thus their only remaining memento and memorial to their existence disappeared, brought back all the wretched memories of what "my country" has done to me and the likes of me.

We left Szölösgyörök depressed, after being watched by silent suspicious locals, who were old enough to guess why we photographed an unattractive village shop. We must have been regarded as ghosts, who came back to haunt the place on behalf of some people whom they could forget and don't like to remember.

APPENDIX A

(The following is based on Appendix A (The Fate of the Jews in Hitler's Europe: By Country) from: The War against the Jews 1933-45 by Lucy Dawidowicz, published by Pelican Books / Penguin Books Ltd. 1975)

HUNGARY.

Hungary's policies before and during the war can best be understood in the light of her revangist goals. In November 1938 Hungary joined Germany in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, annexing some Slovakian districts and a part of Subcarpathian Ruthenia. In March 1939, when Slovakia declared itself an independent state, Hungary occupied the rest of Ruthenia. In August 1940 Hungary received northern Transylvania from Romania under the Vienna Award. As repayment Hungary joined the Tripartite Pact on 20 November 1940. In April Hungary occupied the Bácska basin in north-eastern Yugoslavia.

On 22 June 1941 Hungarian forces joined the Germans in invading Russia, though Hungarian military participation was less than whole hearted, with Regent Nicholas Horthy resisting German demands for Hungary's general mobilisation. In March 1942 Horthy replaced Hungary's pro-German Prime Minister László Bárdossy with Miklós Kállay, who sought to disentangle Hungary from the war. Hungarian losses on the Russian front and Hungary's preoccupation with her traditional enemy, Romania, accelerated Hungarian troop withdrawals from the front, to the extent permitted by Germany.

In early 1943, Hungary appeared, in Hitler's eyes, to be acting more like a neutral than a German ally. Consequently, in April 1943 Hitler summoned Horthy to his headquarters in Klessheim Castle near Salzburg and criticised him for Kállay's policies, both as to Hungary's obligations to Germany and as to the need to eliminate Hungary's Jews. Kállay, however, continued his policies and in August 1943 broadcast a peace speech, following the overthrow of Mussolini in Italy, Hungary's traditional ally.

In March 1944, with the war going badly for Germany, Hitler again summoned Horthy and members of his cabinet to Klessheim (Kállay refused to join them). Hitler confronted Horthy with what he regarded as Hungary's treachery, declaring that Germany had to occupy Hungary. Horthy was held incommunicado for a day; when he returned home on 19 March, the German occupation of Hungary had been completed. On 22 March a new Hungarian government was formed under Prime Minister General Döme Sztójay, formerly the Hungarian ambassador in Berlin. The real rulers in Hungary thenceforth were the SS and Reich Plenipotentiary Edmund Veessenmayer. All political parties and trade unions, with their press, were suppressed. The Sztójay government could not, however, maintain itself because of overt opposition from the right - the Hungarian National Socialists and the Fascist Arrow Cross, under Ferenc Szálasi. Romania's surrender to Russia in August 1944 and the stunning defeat of the Germans at that time by Russian and Romanian forces shook Hungary.

Sztójay resigned on 30 August 1944 and Horthy replaced him with General Géza Lakatos in an effort to restore more Hungarian autonomy. In October 1944 Russian forces crossed into Hungary.

On 15th October Budapest radio announced that Horthy was asking the Russians for an armistice. The German SS under Veessenmayer reacted swiftly by kidnapping Horthy's son and holding him under threat. They thereby forced Horthy to appoint Arrow Cross Chief Szálasi as Prime Minister and Leader of Hungary. Szálasi cancelled the armistice, but the Hungarian commander-in-chief and his chief of staff went over to the Russians. By November 1944 the Russians had overrun two thirds of Hungary and had reached Budapest's outskirts. Budapest remained under Russian siege until February 1945, though the Hungarians had signed an armistice a month earlier. Finally, by 4 April 1945 no more Germans remained in Hungary.

JEWS IN PRE-WAR HUNGARY.

In 1930, 445,000 Jews lived in Hungary, about 5 per cent of the population. Half lived in Budapest, where they made up 20 per cent of the population, and in two other large cities. The rest of the Jewish population was dispersed; there were twenty-four communities with about 1,000 Jews each and 180 with fewer than 1,000 Jews each.

In a country with a landed aristocracy and a large peasantry, the Jews were distinctively middle class. Of gainfully employed Jews, 38 per cent were self-employed businessmen in industry (including small craftsmen), commerce and banking, and also professionals; 28 per cent were salaried (white-collar employees mainly in commerce, banking and industry); and 33 per cent were wage earners (worker), though predominantly in commercial enterprises.

Most Jews in Budapest were highly acculturated, in contrast to the Jews in the small towns where Orthodoxy prevailed. There were three national religious Jewish communities: the Neologs (somewhat similar to Reform Jews), the Orthodox, and a smaller organisation called "Status Quo Ante Jewish Communities" who stood somewhere between them. Inter-marriage and baptismal rates were quite high; in 1938 there were 35,000 baptised Jews in Hungary. Conversions, the declining birth rate and continuing emigration as a consequence of Hungary's anti-Semitic policies reduced the size of the Jewish population of Hungary, estimated at about 400,000 in 1939.

Hungarian Jews had been emancipated in 1867, but resentment on the part of the non-Jewish population - because of the territorial losses after the First World War, chaotic economic conditions and the abortive Communist dictatorship of Béla Kun were vented on the Jews. Horthy came to power as a blaze of pogroms raged in Hungary, particularly in the provinces.

The violence was followed by various administrative measures eliminating most Jews from public service and restricting their admission into universities. From 1924 to 1933, under the conservative regime of Count Stephen Bethlen as Prime Minister, the situation of the Jews somewhat stabilised, but in the mid-1930s, under the impact of National Socialism in Germany and its Hungarian admirers, anti-Semitism intensified.

On 24 May 1938, a month after Hitler's annexation of Austria, the Hungarian parliament, in an effort to appease Hitler and prevent seizure of power by the Hungarian Nazis, enacted its first anti-Jewish law, prepared by the Horthy government, despite the bitter opposition of the Smallholders and Socialist parties and Bethlen's conservative followers. The law limited employment of Jews in private business firms to 20 per cent. A year later, a more far-reaching anti-Jewish law was passed, defining the status of Jews, barring them from leading positions in the media, prohibiting the issuance of new trade licences to them or the renewal of old ones. The law also barred further admission of Jews to the professions until their share fell below 6 per cent.

It authorised the government to expropriate, with compensation, Jewish landed property. Jews could no longer acquire Hungarian citizenship by naturalisation, marriage or adoption. Voting rights of non-native Jews or those whose forebears were not permanently resident before 1868 were cancelled.

JEWS IN WARTIME HUNGARY

After Munich and the Vienna Awards, Hungary added another 250,000 to its Jewish population of 400,000: 75,000 Jews in former Slovakian territory, 25,000 in the Bácska basin of Yugoslavia and 150,000 in Transylvania for a total of 650,000 Jews in Greater Hungary. There were, besides, some 100,000 Christians, who were regarded as "racial" Jews and subject to anti-Jewish laws. (In August 1941 a more stringent law was enacted, defining who was a Jew.)

In August 1941 the Hungarian government rounded up some 17,000 stateless Jews in its annexed Ruthenian territory and pushed them over the border to Kamenets-Podolsk in the German-held Ukraine, but the Germans complained that the Jews disrupted their military communications. After the Hungarians drew off several thousand to be used as slave labourers,

the German Einsatzkommandos massacred the remaining 11,000. Several thousand Yugoslav Jews were also massacred by the Hungarian occupying forces at Novi Sad.

No further deportations took place and when the Kállay government took over in March 1942 Jews were subject only to tightening employment restrictions, forced-labour conscription and more extensive expropriations. Some 16,000 Jews from Austria, Slovakia and Poland even found refuge in Hungary and were not handed over to the Germans. At the end of 1942, Kállay rejected German demands to introduce yellow badges for Jews and deport them to Poland. In May 1943 Kállay, in a public speech, rejected "resettlement" of the Jews as a "final solution" so long as the Germans were giving no satisfactory answer about where the Jews were being resettled.

The virtual German occupation of Hungary in March 1944 and the installation of the pro-German Sztojay government drastically transformed the situation of the Hungarian Jews. On 19 March, the very day of the German take-over, Adolf Eichmann himself came to Budapest with a battery of SS officers in charge of Jewish affairs. Eichmann ordered the Jewish community leaders to appear for a conference the next day, when they were told to establish a Judenrat which would have to carry out German orders. Meanwhile, on 29 March new anti-Jewish legislation was enacted, forcing Jews entirely out of the professions, ordering the registration of their property and arranging for its almost instant expropriation. The yellow star was introduced and the Jews were concentrated in designated places.

To carry out the deportations of the Jews, Eichmann divided Hungary into six zones:

Zone I = Carpathians;

II = Transylvania;

III = Northern Hungary;

IV = Southern Hungary east of the Danube;

V = Transdanubia,

including the suburbs of Budapest;

VI = Budapest.

With the participation of a Sondereinsatzkommando (special duty commando) that Eichmann had brought from Mauthausen and with the help of Hungarian police, the Germans began to round up the Jews, concentrating them within the designated zones and deporting them in rapid order.

By 7 June Zones I and II had been cleared of nearly 290,000 Jews. By June 30 over 92,000 Jews had been deported from Zones III and IV. By 7 July over 437,000 Jews, including some 50,000 from Budapest, had been deported to Auschwitz.

Meanwhile, the Jewish relief committee in Budapest, following up earlier initiatives of Slovakian Jews, began negotiations with SS Hauptsturmführer Dieter Wisliceny about ransoming the remaining Hungarian Jews from deportation. On behalf of the Jewish relief committee, Joel Brand was sent to Turkey to contact the Allies about the possibilities of exchanging goods for Jewish lives. Negotiations were protracted and complex, but Eichmann never halted the deportation trains. Finally, nothing substantial developed in the rescue of the Jews, except for one trainload of Hungarian Jews who were saved.

In July 1944, after news about the Hungarian deportations had been sent abroad, various high-level interventions on behalf of the Jews began to dismay the Hungarians. Horthy ordered the deportations halted.

When the pro-German government was toppled in August, the new Prime Minister Lakatos asked the Germans to remove Eichmann's Sondereinsatzkommando. Some anti-Jewish restrictions began to be lifted, but after the German "coup" in October 1944, with Arrow Cross leader Szálasi as Prime Minister, the Jews again fell into German hands for deportation. By 26 October some

35,000 Jewish men and women had been rounded up, but since Auschwitz was then being liquidated, these Jews were to be used as slave labourers. The exigencies of war rendered railway transportation almost impossible and so the Germans marched off 27,000 Jews on a terrible trek of over 100 miles to Austria. But Szálasi soon stopped these marches because of the high death rate. Some 160,000 Jews remained in Budapest, subject to terror and murder at the hands of the Arrow Cross, suffering cold, hunger and disease in their ghetto-like quarters, under the rain of Russian bombardment. About 20,000 died that winter in Budapest. On 14 February 1945 the Russians took Budapest.

Over 450,000 Jews, 70 per cent of the Jews of Greater Hungary, were deported, were murdered or died under German occupation. Within the boundaries of lesser (pre-1938) Hungary, about half the Jews were annihilated. Some 144,000 survived in Budapest, including 50,000 "racial" Jews, and about 50,000 to 60,000 survived in the provinces.

AN AFTERTHOUGHT.

I started writing my "book" in July 1983 and finished in October. I hurried, because I wanted to be ready for Christmas with a bound copy for my wife, Joy, two more for my two children and their spouses and one each copy to be sent to my Mother and brother in England. I also had to write it in secret, because I wanted it to be a surprise to them all. In this I succeeded, in spite of the fact that almost all of it was written on my word processor at home, ostensibly watching TV with Joy in the family room.

Not knowing what was going on, Joy expressed her surprise at the amount of work I had to bring home from my business and the hours I kept. I usually hammered away on the keyboard until midnight and after 4 hours of sleep got up to do some more. She decided that I must be getting on with considerably less sleep than I used to, - a sign of my getting on in years.

I found it quite easy to write the story. It caused me no anxiety to relive those days in the forties and it was only when I finally read the whole of my own story from beginning to end, that I became quite nervous and almost disbelieving that I was reading about myself. It was as if I consciously shut out of my mind the period of my life which I did not enjoy and not until I was confronted by my own story did I once again start to react. In fact for the first time ever I started to have nightmares and woke up to wonder what it must feel like to be shot.

We in Budapest were extremely fortunate, because our turn to be destroyed came so late in the war, - our enemies run out of time to kill us all. For this reason I never considered my whole story of interest, and some episodes were of interest only to my closest friends and my family. Not until I read my story did I realise that my experiences and my survival were not ordinary, yet I still believe it to be just average.

Yet, reading certain parts of my own story made me emotional and I had tears in my eyes reading what I wrote without any feelings and with a detachment, which I could hardly believe afterwards.

Only when I read my story and seeing my life as a "whole" and not as isolated incidents, did I realise how many were the coincidences and close shaves. This worried me because I feared, that people will not believe what I have described. But since then I read some other books from better writers and one: "By my own Authority" which has an even more unbelievable story than mine.

There are no stories of those times which I do not believe. Some of the stories cannot have been invented by amateurs who decided to write their story. I also believe that the best stories will never be told, because the people who could have written them are not alive. The miracles which kept the survivors alive, happened not just to us, but also to those who perished. We all had miracle after miracle, every day alive was one. However, it seems that all the miracles worked for me all the time, - the losers had just one miracle too few. One failed miracle was all you required for death to catch up with you.

When on Christmas Day in 1983 the presents were handed out by my grand-daughter and my children and wife realised that my parcel to them was a book I wrote for them, their reaction was very enthusiastic. When my son retired for a rest after the gigantic

Christmas lunch we consumed and emerged three hours later, during which he read the book, his tearful eyes made my efforts of surviving and writing about it worthwhile.

It is interesting that ever since I wrote my story I became interested in what went on during the Holocaust in places distant from Hungary as well as within the country. In May 1985 I attended a three day gathering in memory of the 40th anniversary of the Holocaust and accompanied by my daughter attended a memorial service and the dedication of a park and statue for Raoul Wallenberg. I also volunteered to speak about the Holocaust to members of my Rotary Club.

During the past 40 years or so it was attempted to belittle what has happened. Barely have the bodies in the camps been covered by soil, efforts began to cover up what went on. I was never mistreated during the war, I was not more hungry than the rest of the population, yet I saw what has happened and it is my duty to talk on behalf of those who cannot.

I spoke to my Rotary Club on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Holocaust, not on my personal experiences, but on the enormity of the Holocaust itself. In my speech I said:

"While I do not consider that my story is one of particular horror or sadness, two years ago I felt duty bound to write it and present my story to my children and grandchildren, so that they and their descendants may know what happened to one of their forebears who was lucky or resourceful enough to have survived."

"It is of interest to note that it took me 39 years before I could write this book. Straight after the war, when everything was fresh in our minds we simply wanted to forget the horrors, which we could not then (or even now) comprehend. Then came a period of time when we wanted to tell our adventures to other survivors."

"But after a while there came a time when, we the survivors, felt our duty to tell about the Holocaust to others, so that all should know what happened and benefit from it. There is this overwhelming compulsion to tell, to tell, to tell, - before it is too late, because few were the survivors and day by day, like the original Anzacs, the witnesses are dwindling."

During 1984 quite a few people read my book and I had a number of comments. Most of the people who were not participants in the Holocaust were impressed, not so much with the literary effort, but due to the fact that they knew me and it must have been quite a surprise to them that their relation by marriage or the suburban friend they knew had a past so unlike their own. Some of them were very kind and suggested that it should be published. Some were even kinder and offered to help me rewrite it. If I agree with them it is only because I still feel it my duty to make available my story to those who come after us and who can benefit by reading it.

Some of the readers thought that I should have given more details of what happened to me after the war. In the original version I closed my story with the statement that I married a New Zealand girl in 1952 and lived happily ever after. This closed a chapter of my life on a happy note and I could have left it at that. Indeed with marriage to Joy and with the arrival of our children I became content and happy to a degree which I could not have described properly in writing and certainly could not have foretold during the horrors, just 8 years before I was married.

But I can understand those who said that the story is not complete if the rest is not told. After all, my experiences in Budapest and how they influenced (or did not) my subsequent life could be of interest, especially to those, who are not survivors of the Holocaust and who have difficulty in understanding how former inhabitants of concentration camps or people who lived at a constant risk of being murdered, can live a normal life after their experiences. I like to assure people who ask that question, that I found that quite easy. Yet I understand the problems of those who were survivors of the murderous Burma railways or who were fighting in Vietnam.

I often heard it said that the greatest revenge the Jews inflicted on Hitler is the success of Israel. This is true, but in my view, the success of the Jews in surviving the Holocaust and yet staying normal; assimilating to become part of the nations where they re-settled, (be it Israel, Australia or Scotland) is not only a slap in the face of the nazis, but also a sign of their vitality. Maybe, there is such a thing as atavism, maybe being persecuted for centuries teaches people how to become good survivors.

I have now decided to rewrite my "book" to describe my "normal" life and I hope that this will be appreciated by those tolerant few who reached thus far in my story.

January 17th, 1986.

GREAT BRITAIN

For an Englishman to arrive home to England after years in war and away from home must have been quite an experience, but for a Displaced Person like me to arrive for the first time to England was an indescribable shock. Quite apart from seeing my parents after a parting of over two years and noting that all the vehicles were travelling down the wrong (i.e. left) side of the street, it was the first time in my life that I was in a country where I did not understand what people were saying.

However, the greatest shock was democracy in practice. The first Sunday afternoon I was taken to Speakers Corner in Hyde Park and I was petrified that I would get into trouble just for standing around, while some soap box orator was berating Prime Minister Attlee and in the same breath declaring Mr Churchill to have been a traitor to his country. The girl who took me there on behalf of my Father, for the express purpose of showing me democracy, could not understand my panic of wanting to get away from the place, where I believed the police would soon make arrests of all who stood around. She was brought up in England and that is why she could not comprehend my fears.

Later that afternoon I learned more about democracy when a very casually dressed 17 years old Vera and 22 years old Steve decided that a cup of coffee would be acceptable and we bowled into a hotel, where maharajas, sultans and other notables were milling around and we asked for a cup of coffee and were most politely shown towards the area where it would be served. However, seeing the cost exceeding our budget, we did not stay and thus my first and probably only chance of having a meal at the Dorchester was thwarted.

That first week in England is one of my most cherished memories. My Mother arranged a couple of tickets for the closing ceremony of the London Olympics, and having been always interested in the Olympic idea, I could hardly believe that it was I who was in Wembley stadium watching the King of England standing while the Hungarian anthem was played in honour of a Hungarian gold medal winner of the 1948 Olympiad.

To welcome me into England my brother John and his wife, Gilly travelled from Scotland and spent the weekend with us. We all went into the Westend of London and visited the Top of The Town Theatre where Tommy Trinder managed to make me laugh, without my understanding a word he was saying. We went to Piccadilly Circus, where, it is said, if you wait long enough you would meet someone you know. Sure enough there were two meetings, I met a school mate of mine and he met me.

We had a cup of tea at the Regent Palace Hotel, where all musicians of the Palm Court Orchestra were ladies. While we were there, John went off to search for some cigarettes and found that a shop was selling handmade Piccadilly cigarettes for the outrageous sum of 3/1d for 25. I rushed out to buy a box, and we even talked Father into buying some for us. There was still quite a shortage of fags, - three years after the war!

On my last day in London, I decided that I wanted to see Hamlet with Laurence Olivier. Mother was less than interested and thus I stayed in town on my own and made my way to Leicester Square where I managed to buy a ticket for the next performance. When I realised that I would have to wait over two hours I sat down in the large cinema's lounge. The waitresses kept asking me if I would like something, so I succumbed and ordered a cup of tea. When the tea arrived I realised that there is a difference between a cup of tea and high tea and from then on was careful to ensure that others knew exactly what I

meant. The cost was 8/-, which must be compared with the 2/9d my ticket for Hamlet cost. However, it was all worth it.

Soon I travelled to join Gilly and John in Scotland. The train journey took all day and was very civilised. I actually had a cushioned seat all the way, which would have been in itself exceptional for someone who was used to travel in cattle trucks or on hard slats in Europe, but to have a dining car, with food and waiters and no food coupons to hand over, was almost too good to be true.

Although there was food rationing in England until 1956, food was sufficient even during the war and there was never any rationing in restaurants. During the post-war years the British were better off than the Germans, however by 1950 the West Germans had no need for ration cards, while the poor old victors were still queuing for their miserly meat ration.

I went to Scotland to assist in putting into production my Father's hammer mill, which



was to have been manufactured under license there. Although Father handed over the complete Hungarian drawings, in the course of these being re-dimensioned in inches, a few changes were made here and there and as a bye product of these changes the machine ceased to work in its re-designed form. In the end it was realised that it would have been better to leave the design without

trying to improve it and when I arrived, the first of the machines in its original form were ready for testing.

My Labour Permit allowed me to work as a Development and Outside Demonstration Engineer at the Ayr factory of the Scottish Mechanical Light Industries Ltd. The Works Manager was my brother and the Technical Director was Paul Sandor, whose brother was the Managing Director and owner, Dr. Bela Sandor. Under the circumstances it would not have been surprising if some of the employees of ScotMec would have been less than enthusiastic at the arrival of another good example of nepotism. However, at no time did I ever encounter anything but kindness and my colleagues went out of their way to be as helpful as they could.

At the same time my brother was trying to ensure not to be accused of favouring me and I was banished to develop and demonstrate and test hammer mills in a lean-to shed beside the factory building. After all I was an "Outside Engineer", and therefore would not mind having to cart hammer mills between the shed and the factory. Although it was mostly raining, in August this was quite acceptable, but when the chilly winds of November made Scotland into a good copy of Siberia, even my fellow Scottish workers

were feeling sorry for me huddling in my outside shed. I was invited to have my morning and afternoon cups of tea in the toolroom and that is where I learned most of my conversational English.

The factory foreman was Sandy McPherson, a friendly smiling man who bred and raced greyhounds. I never heard of such a sport and could not envisage trained dogs chasing an artificial hare and that grown men should be interested in this. I just had to see this. Sandy suggested that I come to the race course, but he warned me not to bet on his dog because he was going to "feed" the dog before the race, making sure that he does not win. When I got to the race venue that evening I could hardly believe my eyes.

There were hundreds of people milling about, a large totalisator board was showing the total bets and likely winnings and long queues were forming in front of the betting windows. I decided to bet half a crown and in my halting English asked for a two and six pence ticket, but before I could say on which dog I already got my ticket for a combination of dogs No 2 and 6, the latter being Sandy's dog. I started to explain that I wanted 2/6d and not 2 and 6, and my bets were for numbers 4 and 5 as tipped for me by Sandy, but there was a crowd behind me and I was too embarrassed at my bad English, so I took my ticket and left.

Needless to say No. 2 romped home, closely followed by Sandy's dog. They were both outsiders and I collected 5 guineas (105 shillings) for my 2 shillings and sixpence. This was 4 shillings more than my weekly wages of 5 pounds and one shilling (101 shillings). I decided that dog racing was a capital idea.

Next week I went to the dogs again and this time I was hoping that I get the wrong ticket. Sure enough, I collected almost 9 pounds on the first race and I left immediately to buy myself a hat, two shirts, a suit and a pair of shoes and take home a bottle of sherry, all for my 9 quid!

When John heard of my beginner's luck he explained how to make money on the dogs and I was looking forward to my third visit and some more easy money. Something appeared to be wrong with his system, because I lost all my weekly wages on the dogs and from that evening on I have never bet on a dog again, although I been to the race course a few more times.

Not being a proper tradesman I had no handtools of my own and had to rely on Sandy to lend me the tools I required in the course of my work and on one occasion I needed a cold chisel, the English word for which I did not know. Sandy was willing to lend it to me, if only I could tell him what I wanted. Finally I demonstrated it to him and he decided that what I wanted was a hammer.

"No, not a hammer", said I and proceeded to draw it.

"Och Aye, you need a screwdriver?" and so we went through quite a pantomime before I got my chisel.

Overlooking all this was Jock Taylor, a not too bright giant of a labourer, who used to help me in lifting hammer mills. When I left with my chisel, he turned to Sandy and said:

"Don't nobody tell me that he is a bloody engineer, if he doesn't even know what a f...ing chisel is."

No amount of explanation by Sandy and others helped Jock to understand that my ignorance was due to a language problem.

We must have been a fairly cosmopolitan factory because in addition to the four Hungarians, we had a Canadian and an ex-RAF Pole. The two standard questions by any Scot on meeting a foreigner was firstly:

"How do you like our country?, followed by :

"What do you think of our weather?"

Ben Carlin, always answered the second question in his Canadian drawl:

"Your weather is just the same as at home, we have summer, fall, winter and spring, but in Canada it comes in this order and over one year, here we get it all in one day and you never know which comes next."

Mr. Nitupski was a bachelor and had a motor bike, which he allowed me to drive on the disused airfield of Turnbury, where we sometimes went to see the sea. He used to go for a drink after work on payday with Sandy McPherson and the tool room foreman and one day I was invited to join them. It was carefully explained to me that it is very important to buy a drink to everybody who bought you one and at that point I should have made some excuse and left to go home. Having drunk ample German beer with absolutely no alcohol content, it never occurred to me that I cannot cope with 4 pints of beer. As it happened, the 4 pints of beer were just the chasers, the real drinks were double nips of whiskies, four of them.

I have been drunk before and (once more) since, but never to that extent. I was put onto the bus in Ayr and the conductor was told to put me off the bus at Prestwick. He probably did. How I got to Boydfield Avenue, where I lived with John and Gilly, I do not know. All I know is what I was subsequently told by Gilly, who, seeing my state, sent me upstairs to bed. I got up to the landing, turned round to say good night, collapsed and rolled all the way down. Gilly was on her own, covered me up and left me there. I could not understand next morning, why I was still dressed and why I was sleeping on the floor.

John and Gilly had a semidetached house in Boydfield Ave, Prestwick, which was famous in Britain for being the only place where they never have fog. Consequently, a big airport was built there during the war and Prestwick became an all important stop for the planes which were ferried from USA. After the war it was still important because most of the planes from Europe stopped there prior to flying to Newfoundland and hence to Canada or New York.

Father was in London and went into partnership with an old established company of millers and grain merchants to manufacture and market some of his agricultural machinery. Almost nightly he was ringing us asking John to join him in his business. John was not too keen because he knew that it would mean the end of his independence.

On the other hand Father did need someone to assist him. He spoke no English then, nor did he do so in later years. Yet he managed to establish a business with the help of two people whose sole contribution was that they interpreted for him. Seeing that Father made considerable progress, John finally decided to sell the house in Scotland and move to London and work in the City where the offices of Mitchell, Colman & Co. were.

I moved to our next door neighbours, Mr and Mrs C. Brown. What their name was I might have known, but never used during the 6 months I lived with them and their two children. The children were young, but old enough to be taken to Sunday School, during which Mr & Mrs Brown stayed in seclusion in their bedroom and were never disturbed. Sunday morning occurred with the same regularity as did Friday night, when Mr. Brown came home after work to change and then left for the Gaiety Theatre in Ayr, where he and his 7 or 8 friends saw the same performance sitting in the same box every week for four or five weeks until the new month brought a different troop, but the same type of vaudeville acts. Two or three times, when somebody was to be absent from the group, I was invited to attend and I enjoyed the typical Scottish variety, but I would have refused to see it more than once.

I went to London for Christmas 1948 and had the interesting experience of having had too much money. What happened was that I saved money for my holidays and just before travelling to London I asked the bank to send me to the factory 25 pounds from my account. They did so, but instead of giving me Bank of England notes they gave me just one note for 25 pounds, issued by some obscure Scottish bank. It was a huge piece of parchment on which the denomination was hand written and signed personally by the Governor of the Bank who issued the note.

Luckily I already had my ticket and I had some change as well so that I made it in the overnight train to London without trouble, but there I could not find anybody who was prepared to change it. Finally I found a bank where they gave me real money for my Promissory Note, albeit I had to pay something like a shilling for the privilege.

Paul Sandor, who was a Director of the company I worked for and I became quite friendly and when his marriage broke up he suggested that I move into his house in Ayr as a lodger. We worked in the same factory and we cooked for ourselves, we went to the movies frequently and we were courting two Finnish girls who worked in the same school. Surprisingly, we did not go on each other's nerves. He had two children and while, during the week they boarded in a school, I assisted with them during the weekend.

Around mid-1949 I had to undergo an operation. Britain has just recently introduced the National Health Service, which meant free medicine and health care always provided you were healthy enough to be able to wait for it. I was in pain, which was insufficient grounds to jump the queue and eventually my parents suggested that I should go to London, where they knew a doctor who worked in a hospital. I did so and had the operation, after which I became interested in leaving Scotland and joining the rest of the family in London.

I left Scotland with mixed feelings. I was looking forward to what London and England would offer and at the same time I was sorry to leave my mates, who made me so welcome and who made my transition from a stateless DP to a resident of Robie Burns' town of Ayr so much easier. Contrary to their own propaganda, the Scots are generous to a fault and have a better sense of humour than they admit. I continued to think of Scotland and the Scots with a great deal of affection and I was grateful to have had the opportunity to commence my British life in Scotland.

Living with my parents in Richmond, I travelled to the City every morning with crowds of people carrying umbrellas and wearing bowler hats and with Father who spoke business to me on the train right upto to Bank Station. Since none of the other passenger spoke Hungarian, we were given a few looks, which never disturbed Father. He, John,

Mr. George Rudolfer and Miss Sari Ignotus and I were the full staff of Mitchell, Colman & Co. Ltd and we were the foreigners in the midst of a large office, where Pyke and Sons Ltd. conducted their old established business importing and exporting grain. Our English colleagues, who sat only feet away from us in the communal office, quietly buying tons of wheat in Canada and selling it over the phone in Japan, must have been quite surprised at the antics of Father, who was screaming in Hungarian at his sons and his two other Hungarian victims. This caused us a great deal of embarrassment and there was nothing we could do to cause Father to turn down the volume.

He often insisted that his sons accompany him to business luncheons, where his Hungarian eating habits of slurping soup were most disturbing to us, but caused no sign of being noticed by the polite Englishmen with us. We tried to tell him, that there is no soup on the menu, but he could spot another diner having some and triumphantly ordered soup for himself.

Another habit of his was to tell a joke in Hungarian and suggesting that we translate it to the Englishman who sat there, understanding not one word, while Father was killing himself laughing at his own story. Usually it was an un-translatable joke on words and when we told him that, he simply started the story in his English and when he got one-third through it, and found it impossible to finish it, he shouted at us in Hungarian, that we should continue it for him. After a while we became quite expert at inventing endings to his jokes.

Soon after I went to London, Father imported a German gentleman who was a grain drying expert. He was accommodated in the Strand Palace Hotel and in his room, I was to have helped him to draw up the design of what became known as the Dryvent System. It turned out that Herr Gronert was not the expert we thought he was and there were large gaps in his knowledge and experience. He was becoming more and more homesick for his secretary, whose every action in bed was described to me daily in preference to grain drying by ventilation. Eventually he left and I remained the sole expert in the United Kingdom of an art, which was not as yet invented nor proven.

However, with Father realising a genuine need for grain drying in England, he was pushing ahead regardless and I was young enough not to see the dangers of my being unskilled and inexperienced in the then rather inexact art of grain drying. We sold our first installation to a Mr John Warburton in Shillingford in Oxfordshire, who was a well known identity and had confidence in those crazy Hungarians. The problem was that my Father and John also had confidence in my knowing what I was doing in calculating the size of the fan, the loading of the heater, the amount of air required and the maximum height the grain should be before it rots or catches fire due to spontaneous combustion.

I am afraid, I did not share their confidence, but there was nothing I could do, but set up the trunkings on the floor of the warehouse, connect the fan and wait for the trucks to deliver the grain. This they did and I watched with a heavy heart as the 200 tons of grain piled onto the trunkings of the very first Dryvent System. At the time a ton of wheat cost 33 pounds and I could see a claim for damages for at least 6600 pounds at a time when the expensive Landrover I was driving cost 450 pounds!

I did not give the impression of being scared out of my wits when, after starting up the fan and heaters, I accepted Mr & Mrs Warburton's invitation for dinner. I said good night to them after dinner and having a last nonchalant look at the grain, left in my car. However, unbeknown to them I travelled but a mile or two and stopped, waited till darkness and

than quietly tiptoed back into the warehouse to check my installation and take the temperature of the grain throughout the night, - snatching a few minutes of sleep in a corner of the warehouse. In the morning I disappeared, washed my face in a pub and returned to the Warburton's asking them casually if they knew how the drying of the grain was progressing.

I must say that all was well with this first and subsequent installations, (except one in Ireland, where the farmer decided to save electricity by not switching on the fan and was surprised when the grain did not get drier), and if the Dryvent System did not become the success it deserved, it was because once again Father was too early with one of his ideas and much too early in giving it up. The method of drying with the aid of ventilation became the standard throughout the World and the method I devised then, and the book of instructions and explanation of the Dryvent System I wrote in 1950 is still as true as it ever was.

Later that year I commenced studying agriculture at the Harper Adams Agricultural College in Newport, Shropshire. I was interested in the subjects, especially because I was not required to sit for exams at the end of my shortened course of one year. Yet I learned sufficient to be able to understand farming practices and connect these sciences to the agricultural engineering I learned at Universities in Hungary and Germany and through my Father and his incessant reading of trade papers.

It was not possible for me stay at College and therefore I lived in one of the many pubs of the village. Many years later I read in a booklet my Mother-in-Law wrote about the origins of her family, that my future wife's Huguenot forebear was the vicar of the church I overlooked from my window in the tiny village of Newport.

While I was there, we celebrated the 100th jubilee of the College and Princess Elizabeth, the future Queen came to visit the place. There were a lot of preparations leading to the visit and it was suggested to Mr Price, the Principal that he should introduce some foreign students to the Princess. There was only one student who actually came from overseas to attend the college, Mohammed Nemjoo, a middle aged Iranian and so they remembered me, who was at least born in foreign lands. When the Princess came past us, the Principal introduced us as "the foreign students" and Mohammed had a little discussion with H.R.H., who turned to me and asked me:

"And where do you come from?" expecting that I would tell her about some exotic place, but she was totally flabbergasted, when I replied:

"From Richmond, Surrey, Mam" which proves that if you are given a role to play, prepare yourself for all eventualities. For the rest of my life, and probably beyond, I will regret that I did not say that I came specially to the College from Katmandu, Alaska or at least Hungary.

While I was in College during the week, Father met me for the weekends in Grantham, where in cahoots with Dick Bates, we were designing a forage harvester. It was an interesting idea and with a lot of ingenuity and the use of some outlandish improvisations, it actually worked. A combine harvester, designed to thrash dry grain grown on dry stalks was to be converted at the end of the harvesting season into a forage harvester, capable of chopping up wet, clinging grass and kale and other gooey matter which felt and looked as if they would have been created for the sole purpose of clogging up everything they were in touch with.

It did work in a reasonable fashion and in fact was good enough to be entered in the International Forage Harvester Competition against such great organisations as John Deer, International Harvester and Massey-Harris, etc. Unbelievable as it may sound, it won first price in the Prototype Section and was certainly the peak of my achievements as a designer of agricultural machinery.

The forage harvester was not the only design in which I was involved. There were such machines as the Strobust, an adaptation of the old Robust chopper which in Admiral Horthy's farm used to have the name of Robur. As the name may suggest the Strobust was used to chop up straw. Its choice of name was better than the product, but it worked. It was made in a Kingston-on-Thames factory and when after 3 months of work, it was wheeled out into a neighbouring lot and started to pick up the straw strewn specially for the occasion, one of the onlookers, who must have been taking bets that it would not work, threw down a handful of money and exclaimed:

"Good God, the bastard works."

In 1950 Father was 58 years old and had a tremendous drive. While he was frustrated because of his inability to make himself understood, he did not allow this to slow him down. The fact that he could not understand what others told him, was his eventual downfall. The fact that he was told in Hungarian what problems there were, was of no interest to him, because the information came from his sons and employees, who, according to him, did not have his experience and therefore could not know.

The Company was so busy searching for new items to make, believing that the next novelty would finally take off and be a goldmine, that only the accountants noticed that the meagre sales were not sufficient to keep paying for the ever increasing staff and for the development costs. As the accountant could not speak Hungarian and in any case used to be employed by the partners, Father could and would not listen to him and he regarded him as a superfluous panic merchant.

When the crunch came, the partners allowed the major supplier to take a small portion of the shares in the Company in exchange for outstanding invoices. Later the capital was increased and Father was invited to either put in his proportion of the money or accept a smaller share of the total or failing this the Company would be bankrupted. Father could not raise any money and the threat of "his" Company being made bankrupt could not even be considered by him. In this fashion he lost his interest in the Company, although he obtained an agreement according to which the new owners of Mitchell, Colman were to pay in his own or his wife's lifetime a percentage on the Company's turnover.

John was invited to stay on as the Marketing Director and he and the Company moved to Manchester. Father was receiving his commission payments and he continued to negotiate on behalf of the Company with overseas suppliers. I was the only one who was without a job and started to read the Positions Vacant ads in the papers. I was looking forward to obtaining a proper job as I had not been paid a salary or wages during the many months I worked for the Company. It never occurred to either me or Father that I should be on the payroll and at the age of 24, working for him, I had to fight for every gift of pocket money I was given. On the other hand I was quite used to this, because from the age of 17, whenever I worked for my Father, I was expected to do so in the interest of the family and not for money. In fairness, I was always given pocket money, albeit never without being told that I should spend less!

Getting a job was not as easy as I imagined. I wrote to all the major manufacturers of agricultural machinery and offered my services. Having been involved in the design of the price winning forage harvester and other well publicised implements I was sure that the recipients of my letter will try to beat each other in obtaining my services. Indeed, I was invited to quite a number of manufacturers between Dagenham, Kent and Kilmarnock in Scotland, with such people as Ford, Massey-Ferguson and International Harvester all wishing to interview me and offering a job. However I always managed to talk myself out of getting the job, - I either insisted that I get more salary than they offered or I felt that I should start at a higher position than they wished to place me.

Suddenly I realised that I ran out of big manufacturers and it was time to lower my sights. I went to see the Labour Exchange in Richmond and they sent me to the specialised executive office in the City, where they could only offer me the dole payment until such time as they found a vacancy for me. I returned to Richmond where, after completing a few forms they gave me my first dole payment of 37/6d.

Once I walked out of the Labour Exchange I realised the mistake I made in accepting the money. At the time I was in England just three years and although after three years I was allowed to change jobs without first obtaining the approval of the Home Office, I was still not free of their control and I was certainly not a British citizen or even a resident. I feared that when I apply for citizenship I might be handicapped because I became a burden to the taxpayer and of course I came to Britain with a Labour Permit to work and not to draw the dole.

Within minutes I returned to the Labour Exchange and asked to see the man, who so kindly arranged my dole payment during the past hour. I asked him to accept the return of my money. In the true spirit of the public service he first tried to talk me out of my rash action, then explained matters to the Manager, who came to ask me to be sensible and please go away with the money.

Next they spent an hour or so on the telephone enquiring as to what course of action they are to take and finally drew up a document which I signed, the cashier accepted the money, gave me a receipt for it and members of that Labour Exchange presumably dined out on the story of having had the first ever dole payment repaid in the history of the British Isles.

Next day the Richmond Labour Exchange rang me and offered me a job in Surbiton in a tractor factory. I accepted. I was to be a fitter's mate, i.e. an unskilled labourer in a large workshop where they assembled imported Allis Chalmers tractors and bulldozers. Here, but for a careless crane driver I would still be, but he put a two ton engine on my index finger, causing my very welcome retirement from becoming a professional assembler of bulldozers.

FUN AND GAMES

In addition to my accident another event during my four months at this factory stand out in my memory. I refer to a dinner invitation I had from George König, a photographer friend, whose girlfriend was sharing a flat with some other girls. George and his Mother organised a dinner party to which all the inhabitants of the flat, together with some fellows, were also invited. To make up pairs I was included and I had a pleasant evening with George and his various friends and an excellent meal.

Some weeks later, in August 1951, I was invited to a party the same girls were giving in their flat and I was again utilised to make up numbers; this time I was to be paired with George's girlfriend's sister who was visiting from Scotland. However, before I even had a chance to be introduced to my blind date, George told me that he now prefers the sister to his girlfriend and would I please look for somebody else amongst the multitude of guests.

One of the girls from the flat, whom I already met at George's dinner party I found attractive and good fun, but she was being attended by a New Zealand guy. When later in the evening we all adjourned to Battersey Fun Park, I made some enquiries and found that this fellow was just a friend, keeping an eye on Joy on behalf of her ex-boyfriend in New Zealand. I decided that if someone needs to keep an eye on her it may as well be me and thus a friendship commenced, which seemed to have withstood the ravages of time.

Joy Marshall was visiting England from New Zealand with a girlfriend, Theda Christensen. They were both school teachers and were working during school terms and sightseeing all over the British Isles and also on the Continent during their holidays. They lived in a fifth floor flat (no lift) in Weatherby Mansions in Earls Court and spent a lot of their time in "ye gods" i.e. in the top galleries of the theatres of London.

Even though we started to go out together, their visits to the theatres continued without my participation, because during the week I could not get myself clean enough to be able to take a girl out. Thus, during the week we conducted our love affair on the 'phone while we spent most of the weekend in each others company. There were parties, romantic dinners in the Czech Restaurant where the Chef was Tommy Lorand, an old army friend, gypsy music in the Hungarian Csárda and pub crawls along the Thames. For culture we visited galleries, theatres and the odd opera and concert.

That our backgrounds were completely different may have helped our falling in love with each other. The only similarity was that our mothers were better educated than our fathers, both of whom were self made and self taught. But that is where the similarity ended. Her family life was tranquil, mine was not; her parents respected each other and their children, mine never ceased to criticise; they lived in the country and in a peaceful happy World, we lived in the City and we never knew peace. Their country was God's own New Zealand and we were Stateless. However: she was woman and I was man. Vive la difference.

After my accident I had to get myself a white collar job and an engineering consultant required a junior draughtsman in his office in Richmond. I accepted the job more for the experience than for the salary. Little did I know that the salary will only seldom be paid by our boss, who did not receive his consulting fees from Allard Cars, whose expensive cars were not selling very well. It was soon realised that Allard and my boss and his employees are all in need of an income. It was suggested by Father that a friend of his and I establish a Company to import and market some agricultural accessories, which he will

find on his frequent trips to European machinery shows. We started off as a mail order business marketing a farm mower sharpener. I worked on a part time basis and earned £4 per week, while my other boss continued not paying me my wages of £6 per week.

Joy and I were keen to listen to classical music and when one of her flat mates moved out with the only radio they shared, I suggested that she and I buy a radiogram together. My salary, even when paid by my boss was just enough for me to live on, provided I continued to live free of charge at my parent's flat and I could certainly not pay half of the £52 the radiogram would cost. However, Joy could advance the money as she was earning well, especially because due to a New Zealand – Great Britain reciprocal agreement she did not need to pay any income tax during her two years visit.



So we bought the radiogram (78 rpm of course) and I was paying it off at the rate of a quid a week. I just finished paying my half, when the time came for her to return to New Zealand. This caused a problem for me as I was to lose both my girl friend and also my half of the radiogram. To overcome my problems, I started to make cautious and very tentative enquiries by asking Joy what her reaction would be if I would one day, - not now, mind you, but one day in the future, always provided, etc. ask her to marry me and thus avert the problems of having to decide who gets the radiogram.

Joy didn't say yes in so many words, but allowed me to think that should I pop the question properly, her answer would not be in the negative and we left it at that. Poor lass, she did not know me well enough to realise that I will never ask her to marry me, but arrange matters in such a way that she never noticed being railroaded into becoming my wife.

It is said that during a leap year girls are allowed to ask men for their hand in marriage. I waited patiently until mid-February in the leap year of 1952 and when no request came I purchased a ring with two tiny sapphires and an equally tiny diamond and arranged to take Joy out to dinner on the evening of the 29th February 1952. Impatience was burning a hole in my pocket where the ring was and thus once we had a couple of drinks at the Denmark pub in Old Brompton Road, I could not resist stopping Joy on the pavement and putting the ring on her finger outside the pub. (It is now part of the wedding ring of our eldest granddaughter.)

That she accepted me as her fiancé was made obvious by the pride and excitement she showed her ring to the lady in charge of the cloakroom and toilets at the 96 Club, where Tommy Lorand's girlfriend, Jacqueline was performing as the resident singer and dancer.

The very next day Joy's cousin, Isobel Paterson arrived from New Zealand and soon I was writing a letter to her parents in which I asked to be allowed to marry their daughter. Having had some experience in writing applications for jobs, my letter to the Marshall's was in the form of an application for the job of son-in-law. To their credit they entered into the spirit of things and although they must have been disappointed that Joy married while away from New Zealand and a foreigner at that, they gave me the job and their blessing. I am glad to say that as years went on our relationship became stronger and ever friendlier.

Being engaged was great and while I was keen to be married, I was quite slow to suggest when. It never occurred to me to even discuss it with Joy, we were too busy enjoying ourselves. Joy lived with three other girls in a flat on the fifth floor of Weatherby Mansions in Earls Court (also referred to as Kangaroo Valley) and although there was no lift in the building, we were young and did not mind the exercise. I was living at home, but we spent all of our free time together.

There was lots to do in London and with all our friends being young, unmarried, carefree and broke, we had a great deal of fun. We went to the flicks (movies) and to the theatre, - mostly to Richmond Repertory on Mondays, when the actors did not as yet know all the lines and thus the cost of a ticket was more affordable.

One evening Joy's cousin Gold and her flat mates were entertaining us in their Hampstead flat when after dinner we all went to nearby Hampstead Heath for a walk. We had a few drinks and thus I was not at all surprised when our group of girls started to fool around and I found myself on the grass and being held down until I was to name the date of the wedding. It was no excuse that I had no calendar available, because the girls brought one along and thus we all agreed that the 30th August would be the Saturday to get spliced.

Naming a date and preparing for it were two completely non-related matters. One was easy and the other was not. It did not help me that the first wedding in my life I was to attend was to be my own and therefore I knew very little of the customs and conventions of any wedding, not to mention an Anglo-Saxon type. But I was ready to learn.

I also decided to change my name from Kalman to Colman. I knew of the complications of changing a name through Deed Poll and was prepared for all the problems and expenses to save Joy from having to spell her new name every time. I wrote to the Home Office and to my amusement all I had to do was to "assume" a new name and ask for a new Ration Book from the Food Office. Had I been British born or at least naturalised I would have had to go through the rigmaroles of the Deed Poll, but not being a "natural born British person", I could do whatever I liked with my name. There you are, being unnaturally born had some advantages.

Joy's parents from New Zealand sent us 50 Pounds Sterling and their regrets that they could not attend our wedding. They suggested Mrs Marshall's cousin, Group Captain George Watt, a WWII hero and soon to be Director of Rolls Royce as a suitable person to give away Joy and on their suggestion we visited a church in the country as a possible venue. However, we decided to marry in Richmond, where Father Chambers at St. John's was prepared to marry us, provided we became proper church goers. We were prepared to give it a go, but even then I could not become a sincere believer and since those days, I have never made the absence of religious beliefs a secret.

I even received a charming letter from my Mother-in-Law-to-be, suggesting that I should give up my Roman Catholic religion and become an Anglican for the sake of all the little Colman children to come and for her peace of mind. In an equally charming letter, I assured her, that I will not mind the children becoming good Anglicans, but I will not change my religion, since I feel it of no great importance which church I am not attending.

We booked the church and we booked our reception in a Richmond hotel and arranged for the printing of our invitations. No sooner did we start to relax, the hotel cancelled the

reception and we started all over again. This time we booked in a Cafe/Reception place situated on the same round-about as the church.

We started to look for somewhere to live and we rented the first flat we looked at. It was referred by the owner as a "garden flat" since the back door led into a garden. In the event it was a basement flat, as used by the servants of the house in the days, when a well to do family in 3 Royston Road, Richmond, Surrey would live upstairs and "they" would be "downstairs".

Joy moved in and started to clean the flat 2 weeks before the wedding and during one of my visits, while relaxing to the tune of Mozart my eye caught a toilet-brush under the settee. I was quite disappointed to notice that my future wife should leave such piece of equipment lying about in the sitting room and was wondering how I should tell her, when I perceived that the toilet-brush moved. After a while it moved again and my disappointment gave way to admiration while I watched Joy coaxing with a trail of milk the little hedgehog, which our toilet-brush turned out to be.

The week before the wedding Joy and Gold moved out of London to stay with her relation, George Watt, CBE, AFC, etc. and his wife Pat were stationed at Slough and the plan was that on the day of the wedding they will drive to Richmond where they will dress at my parents' flat.

In the morning of Saturday, 30th August 1952 I left Richmond and took delivery of the cheapest hire Ford Anglia at the other end of London and joined Gilly and John Kalman in their flat to change into our Moss Bros supplied morning coats, commonly known as monkey suits.

With my best man, brother John, we did not need to wait long before the organ sounds suggested that my bride is coming towards the altar and to this day I am enchanted with the picture my beautiful bride and George made as they walked down the aisle. All went well, neither of us fluffed our lines and we were well and truly married.

The only problem, which could have marred proceedings was the fact that one of the fairly large guests (who years later got photoshopped out of the picture) got stuck in the doorway of the church while the guests were waiting to exit. It happened while we were photographed prior to us entering our Rolls-Royce for the 100 meter trip to Matthiae's Cafe, where afternoon tea, sandwiches, cakes and Hungarian wine from Tokaj were served.



Although the majority of guest were friends of ours or my parents', the Kiwi group included two of Joy's cousins , 4 of her classmates, her "mate" Theda and many others including one lady who was present at her parents' wedding. They were all New Zealanders, while on my side of the church were my friends and all the

friends my mother could muster, including some people she invited by phone on the morning of the wedding.

Also I had the interesting experience of one fellow, whom I last saw or heard of in 1943 ring me and tell me that he will come to my wedding. He came, but I have not heard from him since, which worries me, as he promised to bring along his wedding present.



England - New Zealand - Australia

1952 - 2002

I have the almost impossible task to summarize the next 50 years of my life into the next section of this “opus”, especially as I now have to tell you of the happenings of not just me, but my wife, our two children and there ought to be some mention of our seven grandchildren, the three countries we lived in and many changes in our lifestyle.

But let's go, let's start !

We honeymooned for one week in Devon and Cornwall renting a cheap little Ford and returned to our basement flat in Royston Road, Richmond, Surrey. Joy was going to continue teaching and earning £12 per week, which was to be most welcome to augment my £10 per week I earned in the company formed by my father and his friend, also from Hungary. Our offices were in Piccadilly Circus, which sounds better than it was.

A few weeks after our wedding, something was missing from our life and Joy and I visited our Polish doctor. He heard our story and without further ado he triumphantly and loudly declared: “I know what's wrong with you, you are pregnant, that's wrong with you!” We tried to reassure him, that we don't regard this a problem and he told us to book Joy into the Queen Charlotte hospital.



Nine months and ten days after our wedding our daughter was born at 7:30 pm. which meant that I missed out on the evening visiting time. So I had a drink and tried to bury my sorrow at having had a daughter. It took me just two shots of brandy before I was quite happy and accepted the fact that we shall have a daughter. Nothing like that ever happened in our family since my mother was born...

Next day, holding a bunch of flowers, I waited in the staircase of the hospital for the bell, when all the fathers were allowed to swarm upstairs to visit wives and babes. I rushed to see mine and there she was, a beautiful smiling wife, more beautiful than ever, but no baby. Eventually, I was told to see the sister, who wanted to talk to me.

It was in her room that I finally met my daughter. The sister explained to me that an ambulance will take the baby to another hospital for a check up and treatment, since she has talopes. Not knowing what that is, I asked and it turned out to be “club foot”. It certainly did not make me very happy although when I was shown her feet, my untrained eye could see nothing wrong.

By next day her little leg was in plaster with a metal splint. This was changed at periods for the next 18 months at considerable pain to little Jane, whose suffering was matched with our own anguish. Yet we were happy to know that the inventor of this method, Dr Dennis Brown, treated her and while we could not speak to this illustrious gentleman, it seemed that all is well, or at least that is what he suggested to the many medical students who looked on as our daughter stood on a chair and was being exhibited.



Of course, Joy has ceased to be contributing to the family finances since quite early in her pregnancy and being employed in a family concern, my income was less than satisfactory. Nevertheless, we managed and when a better flat came available in the same building of flats where my parents lived, we moved in. Not being furnished we had to buy furniture and we bought the cheapest, the least and at the lowest weekly hire purchase repayments. There were no credit cards those days, the only cards being ration cards, which weren't cards, but books and required to

buy food, clothing, etc. It was 1953, only 8 years after the end of the war and even if rationing was forgotten in Germany, this was not so in England. Oh well, serves them right for winning the war.

During the course of my business I visited Germany for a trade fair and while I was away Jane managed to get close to the electric fire and was severely burned on her face and neck. Poor Joy had to cope on her own.

It was sometime in January 1955 that Joy had an idea. She was sitting in the bathtub after a strenuous day with me sitting beside on a chair, when she explained her idea, according to which, if we are to visit her parents in New Zealand in the near future, we ought to start thinking of increasing our family. I was quite willing and all I asked if I should join her in the bath or wait until she gets out. We decided on the latter and on 1st November 1955 we were rewarded by a baby boy, we named Michael Steven Marshall Colman.

Unfortunately, his arrival caused Joy to have a cyst in her breast, which had to be operated. A small army of volunteer and paid helpers had to be engaged to look after the children with the result that the little fellow was overfed and had to be put on a slimming diet.

In October 1956 we boarded the MV Tamaroa in Liverpool for our trip to New Zealand. We paid £200 for our cabin below the waterline, while migrants paid just £10 and stayed on the promenade deck. We intended to stay until March 1957 and then fly back via USA, where I was exporting grain moisture test equipment from my London company.

It was a lousy passage, via the Panama Canal and we were relieved to be landing in Wellington after storms, typhoons, a cook, who was knifed and our ship steaming in the wrong direction to save someone on another ship who committed suicide.

In Wellington the local relations greeted us and several more relations turned up at the railway station later that day, to say hello to Joy, and inspect me, the exotic foreigner (in 1957 all foreigners in NZ were) and the children she acquired during her travels.

We traveled with 28 pieces of luggage, which included 2 prams and since the train was to stop for just 1 minute at Pukekohe, we practiced with the guard on how we are going to manage unloading both the luggage and the children, only one of which could walk at that stage.

When the train stopped, we went into the routine. Joy pointed out her parents standing on the platform, the guard started to throw things onto the platform, Joy was holding on to the girl while carrying a case and I jumped down carrying our baby boy, rushed to my mother-in-law and according to plan, wanted to hand him over to her.

However, we did not count on her and she refused to accept the child, saying: “We better wait until he knows me better.” This was not a good idea as I was wanted to assist in unloading the prams and the luggage. Finally I got rid of him to my father-in-law who was more observant and sensitive to the situation.

They drove us back to another relation’s home, where some 20 or so of the clan was assembled to welcome us. And welcome they did and now many a years later, they are still as wonderfully welcoming me in their family as they ever were.

I must add here that my in-laws were wonderful people, whom I loved as much as if they would have been my own. My mother-in-law was a well educated former school teacher, who played and taught the piano, until she took up the cello, so as not to compete with her students. She also became interested in the history of her pioneering family and researched it all from the small New Zealand village of Te Kauwhata. She was proud of her ancestors, who included such differing notables as one of the founders of the Bank of England and a French Huguenot clergyman. She came from a big family, all of whom were well educated and became successful in their field.

My father in law was different. He should have been a Scotsman, although there was a lot of Irish blood and a mischievous sense of fun. His name was Cheviot Dundee Marshall! He lost his mother early and he was never close to his step-mother. He falsified his father’s signature, which was never forgiven, so that he could join the Army and he saw action in the Middle East, Gallipoli and France.

Eventually he left Dunedin in the South and came to work on the railways in the North Island, in Te Kauwhata. He got himself a job in the village store, but left after a while to make a living as a salesman in Auckland, but spent most of his spare time punting at the local racecourse, an occupation he found more profitable.

When his former boss in Te Kauwhata became sick, they started to search for him and people were standing outside the entrances of the race course, until they found him and he was invited to take up his previous job. He stayed there for the next 35 years and became part owner of the business and a local identity. That he came back to Te Kauwhata from Auckland has something to do with the young schoolteacher, whose name was Vera Paterson. They married in 1925.

He adored and was always impressed by his wife and he was a good and tolerant father. His two daughters had excellent and an expensive education he could hardly afford. One of them (Joy) became a high school teacher, the other an artist, while her twin brother became a veterinarian.

While my mum-in-law came from a large North Island family, my father in law had just two siblings. Nevertheless, Joy had 24 first cousins, whereas I only had 1 cousin and 2 half cousins, all living in Budapest.

We stayed in Te Kauwhata with Joy’s parents. They had a big house and I even had a small office provided for me, where I spent my days typing away. Every now and then I

visited Auckland, where I had some business to conduct. My father-in-law was wondering what kind of a guy his daughter married since I was not a gardener nor was I over enthusiastic on discussing sheep farming or horse breeding. It was quite a few years later when he saw that I was the respected boss of a large lawn mower factory in Sydney and a good husband and father, that he accepted me and from then on, he sung my praises, - behind my back, of course.

My relationship with my mother-in-law was always excellent. She thought that having a foreigner in the family was interesting and she was proud of the fact that her daughter married someone other than a Kiwi farmer. She could discuss matters of mutual interest, such as music, the theater and operas and while I could not play music, I appreciated her playing the piano and cello. Not at the same time! I found her a delightful lady and a poor cook. When in later years we went to New Zealand and stayed with her parents, a condition of my going was that Joy will cook at least 3 times a week.

In January 1957 I went to the Wellington and Christchurch on a business trip and from there to Sydney, where I stayed with relations and visited my agents there and Melbourne and Adelaide. I was most impressed with Australia. Quite apart that the sun shone and one could see the stars in the night sky and it did not drizzle every day, it was a vibrant city and I believed, the country of the future. It was the place, where I wanted my children to grow up and where I felt that I could achieve independence and live happily. I wrote to Joy and asked if she wants to settle here. Of course she wanted to and so I went back to NZ to collect her and arrange for the children to stay there until we sorted out our living conditions in Australia.

We arrived on board the Wanganella on 8th April 1957, stayed in a flea ridden boarding house. Next day I bought a brand new Morris Minor from a York Street showroom (on the never-never, of course) and started to look for somewhere to live. We did not need to look too much as a cousin of mine asked me to assist him by renting a place for his large family, who, having escaped from Hungary after the 1956 revolution were coming from Vienna. He found a house and asked me to rent it in my name and suggested that may be I would like to stay there until we found another place.



So on the 18th April we moved into the house, with two wicker chairs and one mattress propped up on 8 house bricks and as I am writing this 44 years later, we are still there. My cousin did not need the house after all and so we stayed there, having bought the house after a year of renting it. Admittedly, we added to the house during the past years, but basically it has changed very little.

Our children arrived on 5th May 1957, my 31st birthday. One of them was not yet 4 and the boy just 18 months old and they flew across the Tasman on their own, being looked after by an airhostess. It was quite a thing for them to fly the six hour trip alone and the airline was quite proud of having so smoothly brought them to us. There were a large number of my relations at the airport when they arrived, so much so that Jane got fright and wanted to go back to Grandma to New Zealand (her way of calling the country she just came from) immediately.

And so our life in Australia began.

A few days later, within a time frame of 2 hours I received 3 job offers, one from New Holland, the agricultural machinery manufacturers, the other from my land developer cousin and the third from Nock and Kirby's a hardware oriented retail store in the City. Seeing that they offered the lowest salary in an area I had no previous experience and in fact no knowledge of the retail trade, I chose it and started work next Monday. On that day I also opened an account with the Bank of New South Wales and made the acquaintance of the accountant there, who became my best friend until he passed away some 20 years later, while his wife became the close friend of my wife, a friendship we are still happily practicing in 1983.

When in 1960 I first went to England, I visited a friend there, who asked me what I enjoy in Australia best. I told him, that I love the friendships I made and the totally unspoiled people there. As an example I told him, that many a Sunday, after mowing the lawn, a friend, by then a bank manager, arrives in his oft repaired shorts and wearing an old T-shirt, bringing a few bottles of beer, which we then consume on the steps of my home. This evoked the memorable sentence: "A better reason for not staying in Australia, I cannot imagine." Needless to say this chap has never left his little flat in the 5 story building and probably still lives there. And he was not even an Englishman, just a refugee from Austria.

I was progressing well as a retailer and must have been appreciated because I received several promotions, until I wanted to improve myself and answered an advertisement to manage a television factory. After a while I got the job, only to be told that I will be manager of a lawnmower factory, recently taken over in secret by the largest mower concern. After a while my company, Pace Mowers, became the No. 2 company in Australia and I became its Managing Director. I also got involved in importing engines from USA and in May 1960 went there and subsequently visited my parents in London.

During the next 7 years I went overseas several times, including a trip to England in 1961, when with an executive of the "competing" mower company we established their UK office. In the course of my work with Pace I often had to be in other States of Australia and in fact the frequent trips to Melbourne, Brisbane, etc. were quite exhausting for me and also for Joy, who had to run the household and look after the children single handedly. Never a complaint from her, but when it was decided to combine the two lawn mower organizations and I was invited to become the Export Director, I was not prepared to accept long overseas trips and decided to resign instead.

Those were the days of full employment and a shortage of managers, it was not difficult to find another position and I became General Manager of large import company, marketing a huge range of engineering products. I cannot say that I enjoyed this position, especially as after a couple of years my immediate boss retired and his position was filled by a man from the diplomatic service, with whom I had many non-diplomatic hassles due to my not being able to accept his miniscule understanding of commercial matters. The end result could only cause my demise and thus, I lost my job. Soon after I had to have my appendix operated on.

Hardly was I capable of walking when I was interviewed by an American fellow and was offered the position of Managing Director of their Australian organization. I was told that the company made very little profit, but was surprised to find that in actual fact it lost \$3 million, equivalent to about \$25-30 million in 2001. With considerable effort and help from my staff we managed to make a profit of \$200,000 within two years, but the constant

bickering with my President and the frequent trips to Pittsburgh for meetings which were of little interest to me or the Australian operation caused me to start looking for other pastures. There were many other reasons for me to do so, such as the Americans trying to sell “my” company to my competitors without my knowledge. I am afraid this US conglomerate was not the most ethical of companies and was the subject of many interesting magazine articles from Time to the New York Financial Times, - never showing my parent company in a favorable light.

For my next trick, I went into partnership with a manufacturing company and designed an office appliance to make coffee, tea, etc. The secret of success was the distribution of ingredients. I was at the point of going into large scale manufacture, when I was invited to meet the Chairman of a large textile organization and was offered the managing directorship of two of their textile mills. As my knowledge of textiles was entirely nil, I refused and kept refusing until the ever increasing financial rewards became irresistible. So I sold my portion of the “Teabreak” company to my partners for the promise of payment by royalties over a period of 10 years and became the CEO of a large textile mill.

I joined in the first week of January 1968 and by mid January it was clear to me that I got myself into a mess. Ever since, I realize that if a company needs to acquire its chief from outside, it is a company not worth joining. Within 6 months I was asked by my Chairman to visit Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan and I left a Sunday morning. Next morning in Hong Kong I received a call from my secretary, reporting that people are going through my papers in my office and later that day I was told that they are looking into my expenses and whether I paid for my textile purchases. I could not care less, because I knew that I had not claimed a single expense during my time with the company and I paid for any purchases I made with my personal cheque.

I did my work as fast as I could, spending just 12 hours in Taipei and on my return confronted my Chairman, a little guy, whom I suspected by then to be a criminal, importing and distributing drugs, etc. and including later on the almost certain murder of one of his opponents, a matter in which he would have been taken to task, had he not died before investigations were completed. Within blinking an eyelid, he told me that he was looking for some reason he can sack me, but while he has plenty of evidence of my sins and activities, he is prepared to pay me \$20,000 in addition to my salary, etc. if I would please resign. I did so immediately and considered myself lucky to escape this gangster. In actual fact, I never received his 20,000 and had to threaten to sue for my entitlements, which I would not have done, preferring my safety to his money.

Why did he do this? The companies I managed were recently taken over by his original public company at an inflated price, since the companies were not making any money, yet they were shown to be profitable. Ostensibly to save the company’s cash, it was he who purchased the real estate at a very reduced price. Having gone on similar take over adventures, during which time he bought substantial amounts of real estate, he then commenced negotiations to sell his shares in his company to a long established Australian public company, whose chairman he supplied with girls from his stable of call girls. After he sold his own shares, the publicly held shares were also taken over and he knew that the value of the assets and the profitability of his various companies will be audited by the incoming accountants. At this stage he needed someone to blame and he was able to say that he made a mistake in selecting an agricultural engineer for the CEO of a textile mill. Indeed, this was described in the annual report. By that time the lady opposing him was

missing and I was not interested in becoming another missing person being dissolved in an acid bath.

Once again I decided to start my own company and never had I made a bigger mistake. Actually, I saw an advert for a small manufacturing business, making statues. Yes, statues of such things as the Venus of Milo, Rodin's Kiss and Michaelangelo's Pieta. Hard to believe, but I fell for the pitch of the man selling it and for the next 6 years I was too proud to give up. I spent my days mixing up a fibreglass like mixture, pouring it into rubber moulds, opening them, grinding the base, cleaning them, painting and decorating and finally packing them. I was not on my own, an old friend became my partner and he suffered with me, until he gave up and sold his share to a relation of mine, was trying to assist me.

I made the statues into lamps, learned how to make marble tables and still found it almost impossible to get more than a bare living. Finally I managed to sell the business to one of my salesmen on time payment and for a year or so I was collecting petty amounts, until he also sold the business and I was paid.

Next I set myself up in business again, with the same tolerant partner and commenced to manufacture fluorescent lights which could be used in ordinary lamp fittings. Great idea but it took off slowly. It was at that time that I wanted to go to England to celebrate the sixtieth wedding anniversary of my parents, whereas Joy was to go to New Zealand to look after her father, who was in the last stages of cancer. A week before my leaving I advertised my business in the Financial Review. At 9:30 that morning I had a telephone call enquiring, an hour later a Jaguar arrived with 4 business people from a well known company, we had a chat in my house, that afternoon an executive of their Melbourne factory flew in, we visited my factory and at 7 in the evening I was told that they will buy my business at the price advertised. I had not one other enquiry and the amount I quoted in the advertisement was a figure which I would have been happy to discount, had I been asked. Three or four days later I received my cheque, in time for me to take a taxi to the airport, where Joy left for Auckland and I left for London.

While she is with her family, her father passed away and with a heavy heart I celebrated my parent's 60 years of blessed and bickering marriage. As soon as possible I got back to Sydney and two days later joined Joy in New Zealand, where I assisted by selling the family home, rebuilding my sister-in-laws house and moving my mother-in-law into that home. Unfortunately, she was by then suffering from Alzheimer's disease and she will live and be looked after by her daughter for the next eight years. We all owe my sister-in-law a great amount of gratitude for selflessly taken up this duty.

I started again by importing car accessories from Taiwan and marketing them through a number of free lance salesmen. Since I had to go to Taiwan from time to time, I organized several business tours and took along some other business men to trade fairs in Hong King, Taipei, Seoul and Osaka. It was quite successful while the import business fluctuated and while some months it did really well, at other times it was not so good. Joy was worried and decided to take on a job herself in a government office and suggested that I should look for a steady job with a monthly income.

Being convinced that at an age of 51 nobody will offer me a job I applied for a likely position and to my eternal surprise I was invited to become General Manager of the bicycle division of a well known public company. The problem was that it was the Managing Director, who engaged me and when the Governing Dictator, (pardon me, I meant

Director) returned from one of his frequent overseas trips, upon meeting me the first time asked the Managing Director if he found me in a geriatric hospital. He, who was a few years older than me, and I were not the best of mates, as can be deduced from his initial reaction. However, since the division commenced to produce substantial profits, he accepted me, although constantly niggled and criticized me, especially after I discovered my interest in small computers.

Another division of this company was importing Commodore computers and I borrowed one for a weekend, only to find that the programming language named BASIC was devised by John Kemeny, a classmate and friend of mine. This only increased my curiosity and I learned about computing as much as I could. My interest and knowledge developed sufficiently for me to plan to open a computer shop as soon as my time with my company becomes intolerable. From my employment history one could deduce that I am a difficult person, which I indeed am, but only with my superiors from whom I expected the same loyalty and brain power as I gave my job.

In April 1981 I went to England to see my parents and while there my interest in computers was further increased. Also, while I was there my father had the first of his strokes. He died in July and in November I opened the seventh computer shop in Sydney. Any computer shop these days would sell 8 to 16 computers a day, but in 1981/82 I was mighty pleased when I managed to sell 4 computers per month and ecstatic, when one month I sold 20. In fact most of my time was taken up by trying to explain to people what computers can be used for.

I started out with a staff of 3, but noticed that they all sat in front of computers playing games, expecting me to see to the odd person who wandered into the shop. After just 3 weeks the staff was reduced to just one, namely me and this was the staffing arrangement during the next 6 years. Readers might ask, how I managed and I can assure them that provided one commences the day with an empty bladder and reduces the liquid intake to nil during the day, it is quite manageable. It might not improve the kidneys, but for just 6 years, the practice might not be too dangerous.

Due to a request from a client I wrote a software package for funeral directors and until a better one came on the market I was having a wonderful time supplying these specialized packages to undertakers, who promoted my software to each other. It became so popular, that I refused supply to any area other than Sydney and NSW. Funeral directors also purchased their equipment from me and in view of my not being able to leave my shop, it was they who came to me for training and learned how to set up their computers and printers

Just before my lease had to be renewed, the landlord decided to double the rent and I decided to move out and conduct my business from home. As I was composing an advert for a last big sale of my stock, one of my suppliers asked me if I would consider selling my business to them. I answered positively and terms were agreed within a few minutes. He suggested that I have a look at his premises, where he was envisaging moving my business and after closing time I did so, telling him that in that location he will be bankrupt within the year. Not taking any notice of me, he moved the business and proved me wrong, since he was bankrupt within 7 months.

My agreement with the purchaser stipulated that I can approach all my old clients and I circularized all 600 of them, suggesting that they might engage me as their support guru under yearly contracts. I had an unbelievable response and for the next 12 years I had my

clients prepaying their annual retainers and me being available to support their computing. I finally retired in 2000 and concentrated looking after our shares, investments and the computers of my family and friends, not to mention the odd fleeting minute of cleaning the pool, I hardly ever use.

During the past years our family has not been idle either. Joy has found a lot of very good friends who substituted the families we left behind in England and New Zealand. Some became very close to us and sadly, we have lost a number of them at a relatively young age. We have also made lasting friends through our children whose parents and us are still keeping in touch, in spite of our children reaching the grown up stage and having become parents themselves.

The various health problems of Joy has brought us closer than ever. Some of these problems were life threatening, while other were just painful for her and required surgery. In 1994 Joy developed non-Hodkins lymphoma which went into remission for the next 7 years, but seems to have returned by 2001. She has a much reduced resistance to infections these days, necessitating five separate stays in hospital with pneumonia during the past 3 years. In spite of this litany of illnesses, she is healthy and full of vigor and humor, belying her 74 years. She does some first class cooking, not just for us, but for our dinner parties, does most of the gardening and until recently did all the household cleaning as well. After almost 50 years of marriage we can still amuse each other and can induce laughter during our togetherness.

Joy loves classical music and few are the times during the day when the sounds of Beethoven or Wagner don't waft in the vicinity of wherever she might be. She and until recently I too were frequent visitors to concerts, but I gave some up lately. For the past 25 years we were subscribers to the ballet and for 20 years to the Opera season as well.

We had some marvelous trips together, not only to Europe and one unforgettable trip to USA, but also in Australia, which has a lot to offer for tourists. The sight of Uluru will never be surpassed in its majesty, but when in Europe or America, we try to soak up the "kultura" and visit galleries and arrange to see Operas, ballet performances and concerts.

In addition of being subscribers to the Opera season in the Sydney Opera House, we spent 8 days in Adelaide for Wagner's Ring, an unforgettable experience we hope to replicate in Melbourne for another Wagner opera. These days opera in Australia is very high grade and it is interesting to note that whenever we are overseas we see that major parts are sung by our Australian artists.

Our children, now in their late 40's still give us pride and pleasure and we are happy to share our love with their spouses. They both have become successful in their chosen professions and they both lead a happy family life. Their happiness is catching and it gives us great pleasure to see their love towards their respective partners. My daughter has a daughter and a son and late in life and after consideration by her whole family adopted a baby who suffers from Down's Syndrome, with all the extra work and responsibility a handicapped child requires. At the same time she is working as a social worker in one of the worst areas of Sydney.

My son and his wife have three girls and recently, their fourth turned out to be a boy. It will be upto young William to propagate the family name I chose in 1951 by continuing the family I founded! I cannot say that I established much of a tradition and in any case, I will be pleased if my descendants have a more steady employment experience than I had.

However, what I hope that all my offspring and their children and descendants will live in an era when there will be less strife in the World and also that they will all be satisfied, with whatever they achieve.

This then brings me just about upto date (October 2001). However, I cannot conclude my saga without thanking my love for becoming my wife and being such a fantastic partner to me during the years which may not have been always easy for her to endure. She never wavered in her loyalty to me and while I do not claim to have been as good a husband as she was a wife to me, I always loved and adored her and still do. Without my Joy I would not be the man I am to-day, without her I would have missed out on a lot of pleasure in life, without her I would not have the type of children and even grandchildren I have, all of whom I am proud to have and enjoy.

Thus I finish, by thanking her and acknowledging the love I received from her and also from my parents and our children and their families and thanking luck for allowing me to survive the war years, so that I can enjoy life to the fullest. For someone, who was to die in 1944, what a beautiful way to spend the next few years! Looking at a family photo, where all 13 of us are together in November 2000, there is no better way to declare:



Look everybody, I am a winner.

I regret to add that on 26th January 2002, my much beloved wife, Joy, passed away after a long illness, which she bore without a single complaint, preserving her dignity and good humour at all times to the last moment of her wonderful life.

About a year before Joy died, we decided that we will be visiting St Petersburg on our next overseas trip. It was not so much Russia which interested us, although I had a certain amount of sympathy for the Russians who suffered under Stalin's regime yet whose Red Army liberated me and my parents in the dark days of the last War. It was just the Hermitage and its many treasures we heard about and which we both wanted to see. Thus we decided to see the Hermitage and the Musee Quay d'Orsay in Paris as soon as we can and we even attended lectures at Sydney University by an enthusiast of St Petersburg.

Thus it was not surprising that after taking Joy's ashes to rest in a Te Kauwhata field, where her parents also are, I was going to St Petersburg on my own after visits to a relation in USA and visiting my brother and his family in England.

My stay in Russia is given in some detail in <http://www.my2002trip.150m.com/> but my travelogue as recorded than, does not give much detail about my meeting Valentina, who very kindly guided me around on her days off from work and gave me exact instructions on what I must do and see on the days when she was working.

I was there just seven days in July 2002, but was sufficiently interested in her to invite Valentina to visit me in Australia and she duly arrived in February 2003 for a 35 day visit during which we did a lot of sightseeing in Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane and more importantly we got to know each other better and she was able to meet my children and their extended families, including my 7 grandchildren.

Four months later I was back in St. Petersburg and this time it was my turn to meet Valentina's family and some friends. I stayed with her for 30 days and it was at that time that we decided that we wish to live together. Of course it is easier said than it is done and on my return to Australia I commenced to assemble the documents required for her fiancé visa, the only means whereby we could gain an Australian visa for her.

I sent off 35 pages of documents while she collected some 30 pages and having applied in October, after a two hour in-depth interview in Moscow and in English, just 57 days after applying Valentina received her visa allowing her to come to Australia, marry me within 9 months and apply for a temporary visa for 2 years after which she will receive a 3 year visa. If at the end of this period she is still married to me, she will be accepted and she might stay in the country either as an Australian citizen or as a resident. (Blessed are the ways of a country where we are all migrants, while the owners of the country are referred to as the Aborigines.)

As soon as she could get away we met in London and stayed with my brother and some other friends in UK for three weeks before spending a week in Thailand and arriving to Sydney late February 2004. It was a lovely trip for both of us.

On the 27th April 2004, in the presence of my children, 2 of my 7 grandchildren and my cousin and husband, Valentina and I were married in a Registry Office.



Those of you, who read my story, know that I consider myself lucky in every way. I survived the war, enjoyed living in England, married a wonderful girl, had two lovely kids, both of whom grew into useful and successful citizens and have their own lovely families while I lived happily in Australia with my loving and loved wife. I even considered good the way and the time, when our Joy left us, as it ended her sufferings. Thus I considered myself lucky these past 78 years and it seems that my

luck has not deserted me now that I met and married Valentina. As years go by I hope that I will not disappoint her either. She deserves the best especially from me, for whose love she left her family and friends to come and live in a faraway country.



After 9 years Valentina seems to be quite happy in her new country and enjoys her Australian citizenship. She insists that she enjoys being my wife in spite of the 34 years between us. She would have liked to get a job, (she graduated as an electronics engineer and was employed in Russia as a software writer) but I prefer for us to enjoy our life together and so she turned to learn and practice cake decorating. She became quite an expert and every time she entered a competition she always was awarded first price. Maybe one day she will not only enjoy her art but make a living as a cake decorator !

We had some wonderful trips in Europe, including 3 visits to Hungary and 4 to England. We visited USA, Canada and New Zealand since our wedding and she visits every year her parents and grown up children, both of who came to visit us in Australia. We were in Thailand some days and also visited Africa (even 'though for one day only) and went to Guatemala to my eldest granddaughter's wedding and (of course) to deliver Valentina's fabulous four storied wedding cake.



I cannot finish without mentioning a joyful and a tragic event in our family.



The first of this involves the birth of my first great-grandson, Sebastian Morales-French on March 1, 2011 in Guatemala.

He now (2013) lives with his parents in Sydney and gives us a lot of pleasure.

The second refers to the tragic death on 22nd October 2012 of my 17 year old granddaughter, Isabelle Colman who fell accidentally from the 26th floor balcony of a hotel, where she, with her fellow students were celebrating the end of their secondary schooling.

She was always a happy loving child at the beginning of her grown up life. She was looking forward to her university education and an exiting life.

